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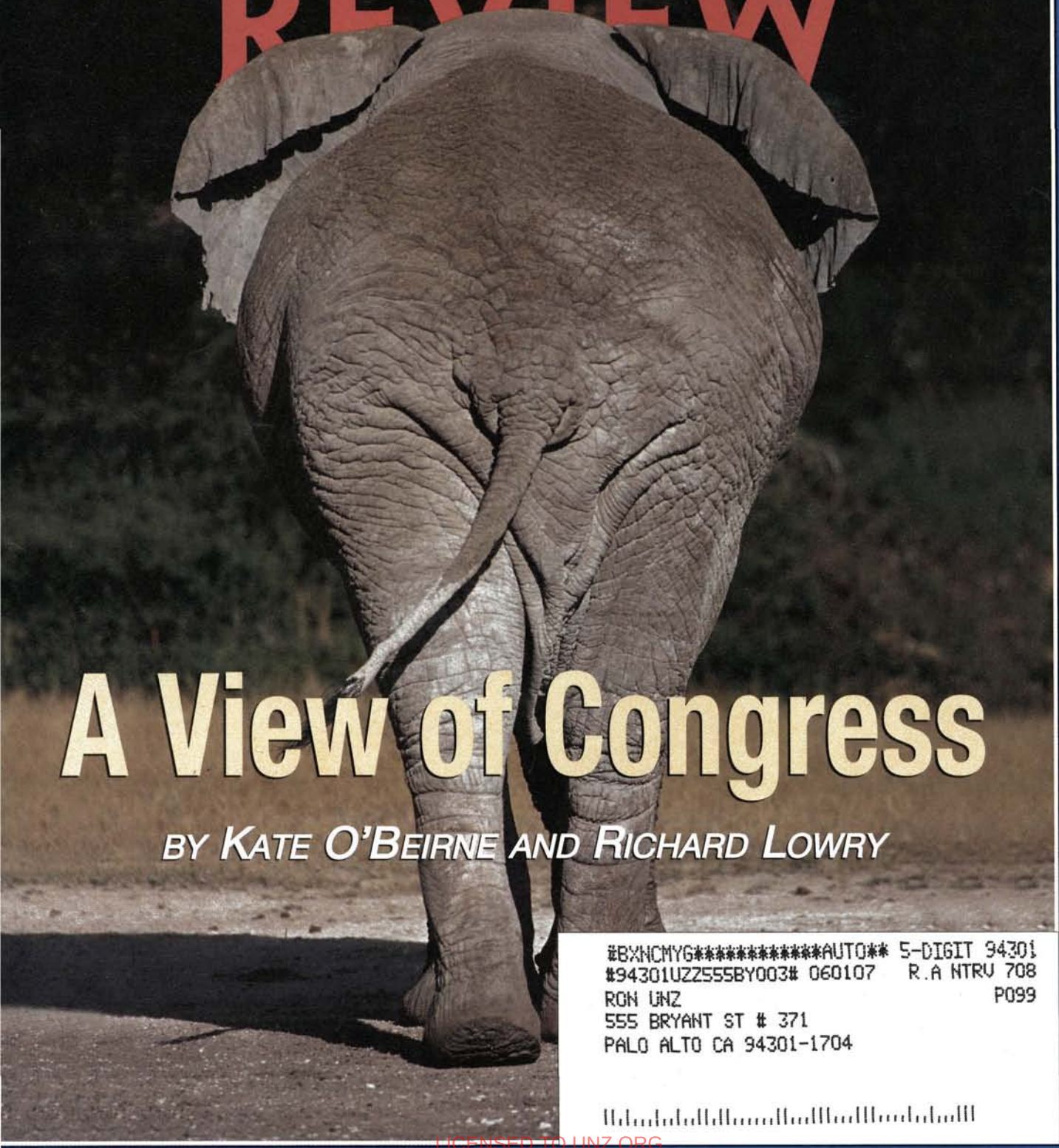

A View of Congress

BY KATE O'BEIRNE AND RICHARD LOWRY

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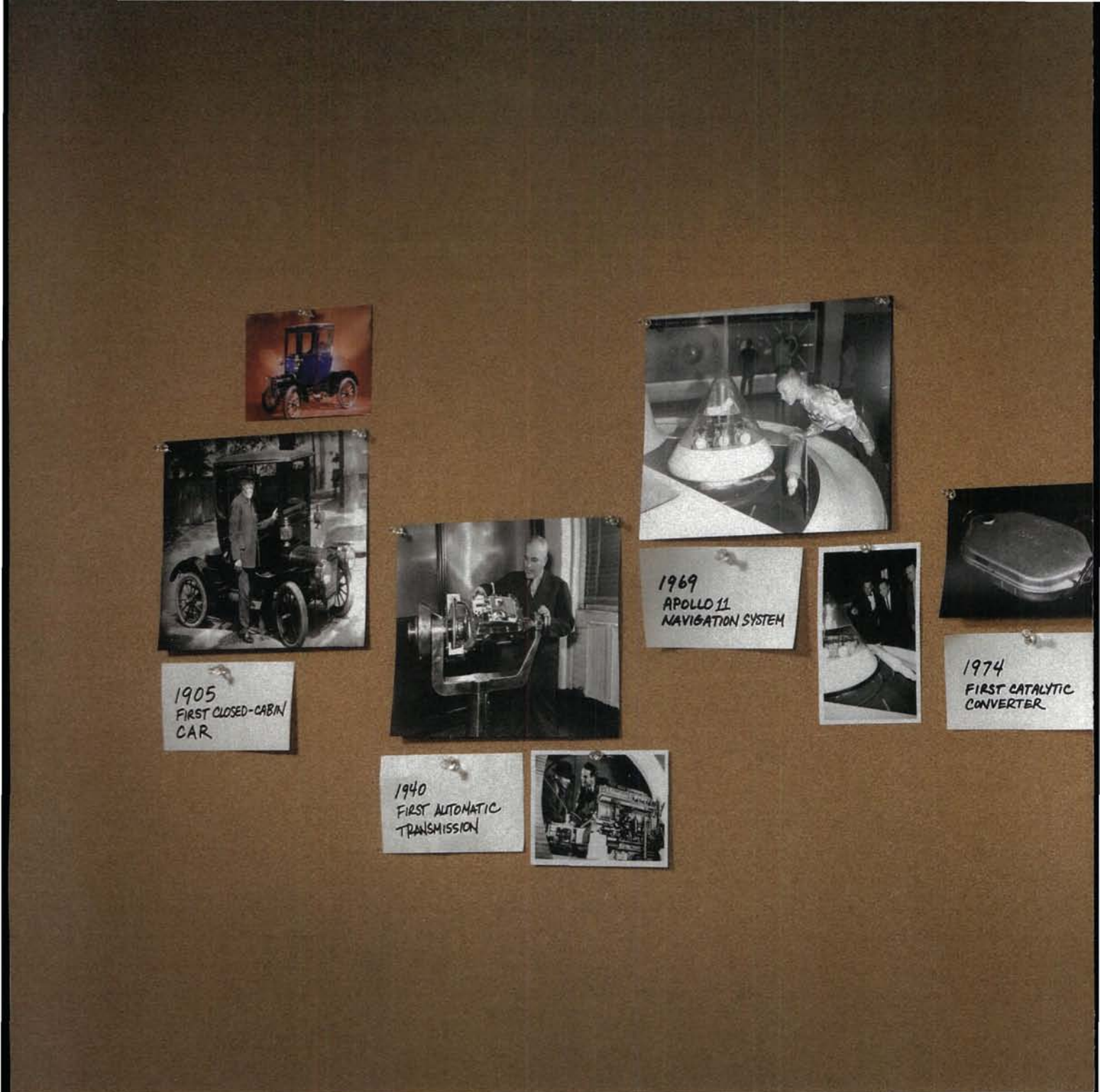

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MAY 22, 2006 VOL. LVIII, NO. 9

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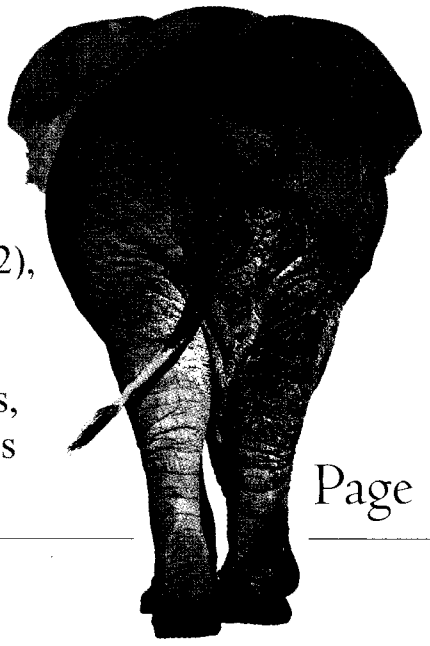
■ COVER STORY

A Congress Gone to Pot

Congressional Republican governance has gone through phases that can be roughly described as Revolution (1994–1996), Consolidation (1996–2002), and Deterioration (2002–present). The deterioration has steadily gotten worse. The Republican majority has lately been notable for its bungling, fecklessness, self-serving defensiveness, and hysteria—sometimes all at once. *By Kate O'Beirne & Richard Lowry*



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NATIONAL REVIEW (ISSN: 0028-0038) is published bi-weekly, except for the first issue in January, by NATIONAL REVIEW, Inc., at 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. ©National Review, Inc., 2006. Address all editorial mail, manuscripts, letters to the editor, etc., to Editorial Dept., NATIONAL REVIEW, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. Address all subscription mail orders, changes of address, undeliverable copies, etc., to NATIONAL REVIEW, Circulation Dept., P. O. Box 668, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054-0668; phone, 815-734-1232, Monday–Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 10:30 P.M. Eastern time. Adjustment requests should be accompanied by a current mailing label or facsimile. Direct classified advertising inquiries to: Classifieds Dept., NATIONAL REVIEW, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 or call 212-679-7330. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NATIONAL REVIEW, Circulation Dept., P. O. Box 668, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054-0668. Printed in the U.S.A.

RATES: $59.00 a year (24 issues). Add $21.50 for Canada and other foreign subscriptions, per year. (All payments in U.S. currency.) The editors cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork unless return postage or, better, a stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed. Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

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May 22 issue; printed May 4

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MAIN NUMBER 212-679-7330
SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES 815-734-1232
WASHINGTON OFFICE 202-543-9226

ADVERTISING SALES 212-679-7330
Executive Publisher Scott F. Budd
Advertising Representative Jim Fowler
Detroit Rep. Joseph J. Colucci 248-626-9918

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letters to the editor

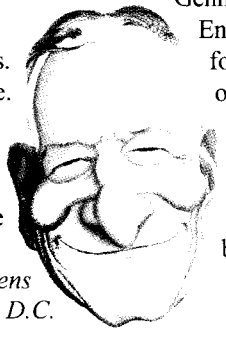
A HITCH IN OUR LIMERICK

If in his May 8 letter to the editor Ernest Lefever is citing the late Lyn Nofziger correctly, then I am very much afraid that he is doing a disservice both to the departed and to the limerick. At least in its modern post–Edward Lear form, the latter simply must observe certain conventions, chief among them the rhythm. Your published limerick went:

A Boston Cardinal named Law
Had an unforgivable flaw.
He greeted pedophiles
With winks and with smiles
Instead of a sock on the jaw.

This should be rearranged so as to go like this:

A Bostonian prelate named Law
Was undone by a terrible flaw.
He would greet pedophiles . . .



And then the last lines can pass. There is no wiggle-room here. The rules of the limerick conspiracy are adamant. It is the rhythm, *and the rhythm alone*, that distinguishes this gem-like device from mere doggerel.

Christopher Hitchens
Washington, D.C.

PLANTING AXIOMS

In an editorial in the April 24 issue it is written that supporters of the Senate immigration amnesty bill must believe in part that "the key to our economic future is to have as many low-income, poorly educated workers as possible." If one is talking about Mexican immigration, maybe it would be more correct to render that as "*motivated*, low-income, poorly educated workers." Obviously our Senate leaders think our schools already produce the unmotivated workers.

Henry Capino
Ulster Park, N.Y.

A DEMOCRATIC CHAMP

Ramesh Ponnuru's essay "Winning, and Losing, on Abortion" (May 8) was much needed. It touched on the plight of prolifers in the Democratic party. In a party rife with Labor Democrats, Environmental Democrats, Tejano–La Raza Democrats, etc., I have long prided myself on being a CHAMP Democrat (Christian, Hetero, Anglo, Male, Prolife). It can get lonely at times, which is why what Ponnuru said needs to be said again and again—and louder and louder—until Dean, Hillary, and the big-money donors of the party realize how detrimental our no-compromises *Roe* v. *Wade* über alles platform is to our electoral efforts.

Brad O'Brien
Ft. Hood, Texas

A NOT-SO-HAPPY BIRTHDAY?

I was saddened to see the cartoon of Hugh Hefner in the May 8 issue with the caption, "Hugh Hefner is observing his 80th birthday—and our Roman Genn celebrates." Hefner's Playboy Enterprises has done nothing good for the human condition: It has only served that which is immoral, degrading, and dishonorable. I feel the pull from this slough within my own heart. His work should not be celebrated.

Gerald Knight
Erie, Pa.

MANHANDLED

I thoroughly enjoyed Charles R. Kesler's review of Harvey C. Mansfield's excellent new book, *Manliness* ("The Male Calling," May 8). It reminded me of the old suggested feminist motto: Men are terrible—let's go and be like them.

Josephine Breen
Macomb, Mich.

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THE WEEK

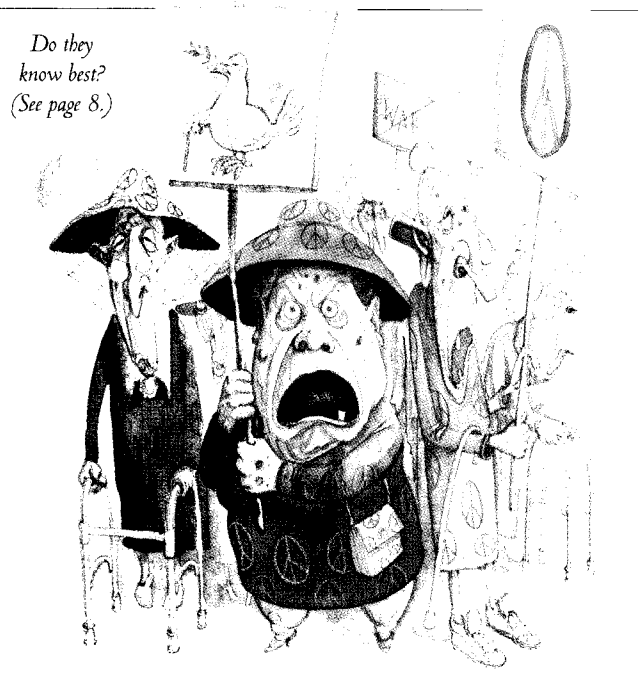
■ Okay, we'll compromise on the anthem: "José, çan you see?"

■ Leftist political organizers arranged a Day without (Illegal) Immigrants. Why can't our border enforcement do the same?

■ Tony Snow is a welcome addition to a White House long on battle-weary veterans but short on fresh talent. The conservative columnist and Fox News host will be a more articulate, self-assured presence at the podium than his predecessor. But we suspect he might have an even greater effect behind the scenes. As a former editorial editor of the *Detroit News* and the *Washington Times*, he is well-versed in policy and understands his fellow conservatives. He wouldn't have been blindsided by the outcry against Harriet Miers or the Hill revolt over the Dubai ports deal. He shares conservatives' frustration with expansions in the government's size and scope. And he will bring important perspective to Bush aides, who at times appear out of touch with their supporters' sentiments, and have been unable to tell which criticisms of the president would have resonance and which wouldn't.

■ The good news is that the economy is flourishing despite the bad news. The Fed has been raising interest rates, oil and commodity prices have skyrocketed, uncertainties about the Middle East have contributed to terrible consumer sentiment, and the housing market is no longer a source of strength. Yet real GDP growth was a whopping 4.8 percent in the first quarter. The job market is strong, with over 200,000 jobs added in March and an unemployment rate of 4.7 percent, down from over 6 percent in the middle of 2003. And there are no signs that the growth is petering out. Indeed, durable-goods orders advanced 3.4 percent in February and 6.1 percent in March. These orders will generate shipments and substantial output growth in the second quarter. The vigor of the economy in the face of negative forces is truly a marvel. Imagine how sweet things will be when the Fed stops increasing interest rates, oil prices decline, and the lion is cuddled up with the lamb.

■ Rush Limbaugh has emerged unbowed from a Kafkaesque journey through Florida's justice system. While addressing painful medical conditions, Rush became addicted to painkillers. He faced the problem, sought treatment, and has been clean for nearly three years. That should have been the end of the story. Instead, an ambitious state prosecutor from Palm Beach County, a Democrat, saw an opportunity to make hay by persecuting a conservative icon. Public resources budgeted for corralling real offenders were instead lavished on this shabby investigation. Rush's private medical records were seized and shamefully leaked to the media, although they proved no crimes. The investigation became an innuendo spigot, spewing rumors of rampant drug trafficking, money laundering, etc. There was only one



Do they know best? *(See page 8.)*

ROMAN GENN

constant: Rush insisted that he was innocent, and rebuffed browbeating efforts to force a guilty plea. Finally, last November, the state's attorney handling the case made the astounding concession that, after three years of combing through Rush's personal life, the prosecution had no proof of any violations of law. The "case" had collapsed. Even under the just-reached settlement, the stench of selective prosecution lingers. The prosecutor filed a single "doctor shopping" count—a charge almost never used, and unearthed just for this matter. Rush, however, maintains his innocence, and the matter will be dropped in 18 months—with Rush in exactly the position he'd have been in if he'd taken the matter to trial and won. A victory for sure, but a frightening display of awesome power put in the service of crude politics.

■ Sean Wilentz is the modern Arthur Schlesinger Jr.—an Ivy League historian who puts his brisk crossover prose at the service of the Democratic party, past and present. *Rolling Stone* asked him to assess "The Worst President in History?" "From time to time," Wilentz writes, "I kick back with my colleagues at Princeton to argue idly about which president really was the worst of them all." (This prose isn't crossing over so well; can anyone believe that the author of that sentence ever really kicks back?) The worst president, according to Wilentz, turns out to be the incumbent. He and the editors of *Rolling Stone* should consider a new assignment: the most blinkered historian. William Dunning, who taught a generation to disdain Reconstruction? Claude Bowers, his heir, who blackened Federalists and Whigs into the bargain? John Quincy Adams, a scholar/politician who washed his hands of his alma mater, Harvard, when it gave an honorary degree to Andrew Jackson—"a barbarian" who could

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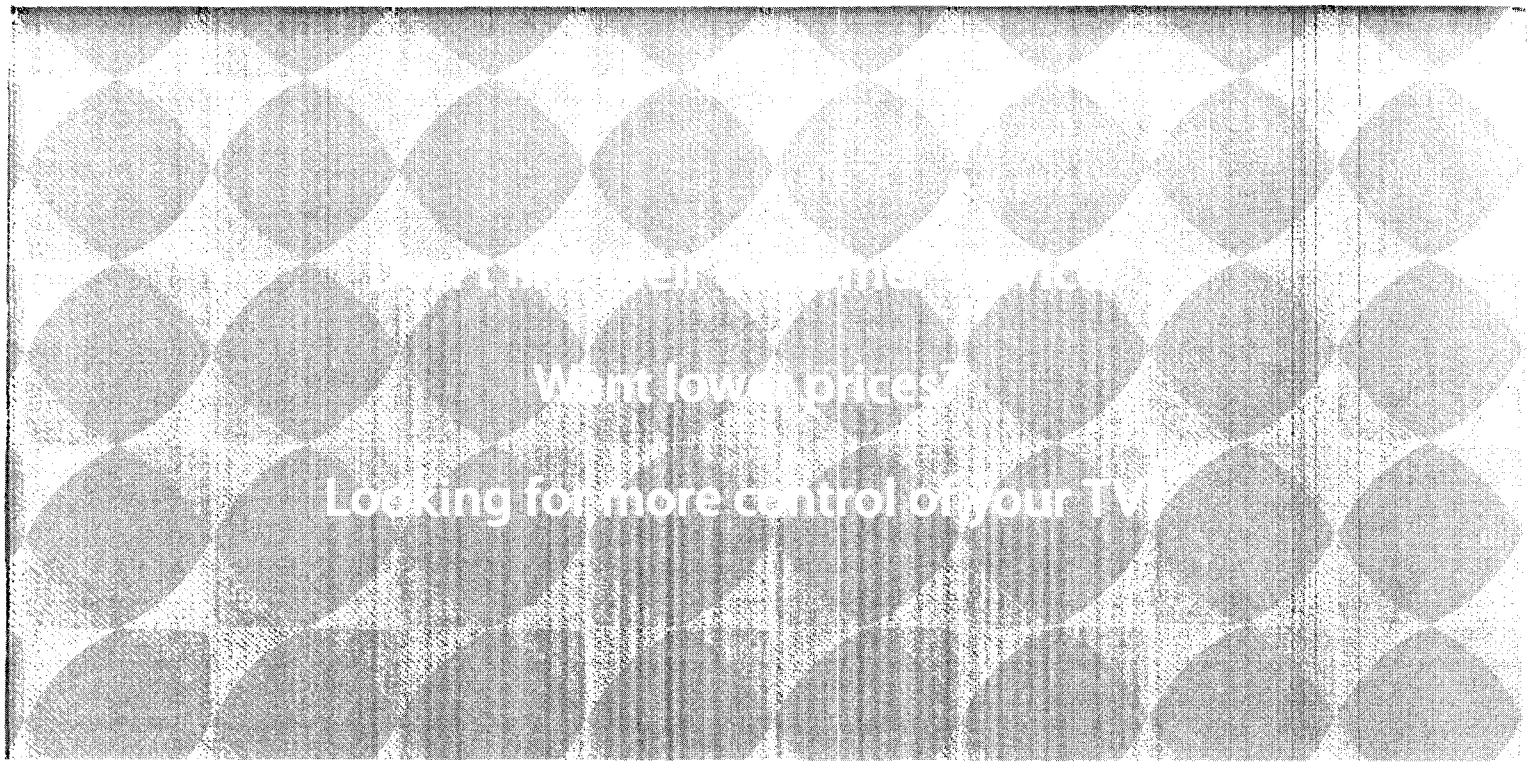

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THE WEEK...

"hardly spell his own name"? Wilentz ends by quoting Lincoln: "Fellow citizens, *we* cannot escape history." Neither can those who try to write it with bile.

■ Colin Powell joined the retired generals' Bush barbecue. In interviews with Britain's ITV and *AARP The Magazine*, Powell explained that he was not as these publicans. He warned, before the war, that we needed more troops: "I made the case to General Franks and Secretary Rumsfeld [in front of] the president that I was not sure we had enough troops." He still thinks so. "The president's military advisers felt that the size of the force was adequate; they may still feel that years later. . . . I don't." Condoleezza Rice, Powell's successor as secretary of state, tried to put the second-guessing in perspective: "[Bush] listened to the advice of his advisers and ultimately . . . to the advice of his commanders, the people who actually had to execute the war plan. And he listened to them several times." The secretary spoke truly, but in vain. Everyone gives conflicting advice; when trouble occurs, everyone remembers it, these days, publicly. The president must decide, and hope that he decides, and keeps deciding, right enough to win in the end.

■ Say you're a Hollywood mogul. You've got a problem. It could be that some pesky actor wants out of a contract. Or an old girlfriend is threatening to sue. Or a business partner is making trouble. Who you gonna call? We've been learning lately that quite a few top guns in the entertainment business turned to Anthony Pellicano, the "private investigator to the stars," who would tap the phones of his clients' enemies and use the illegally obtained information for a campaign of threats and intimidation. There have been a lot of recent revelations about Pellicano—who has served time in prison for the illegal possession of, among other things, hand grenades and plastic explosives—but no one seems to want to mention two of his most famous clients: Bill and Hillary Clinton. Pellicano first used his talents in behalf of the former First Couple back in 1992, when he tried (unsuccessfully) to discredit Gennifer Flowers's claim that she had had an affair with Bill Clinton. Then Pellicano popped up again during the Lewinsky scandal, when he was assigned the task of finding out what was on those tapes of Monica Lewinsky talking with Linda Tripp. Now, of course, Mrs. Clinton is getting ready for a run for president, and—you never can tell—maybe Pellicano will be there to help (if he's not in jail). We just thought you should know.

■ The FDA has proclaimed that there is no scientific support for the medicinal benefits of marijuana. Yet the pronouncement appeared to be driven more by politics than by science. The FDA's statement conflicts with earlier studies, most notably one done in 1999 by the Institute of Medicine, a non-profit medical advisory group. And then there are experts such as Dr. Jerome Kassirer, a former editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine* who says of the FDA's claim: "I think it's ridiculous. The fact is there are circumstances where smoked marijuana may be helpful to patients who are desperately ill." Such sparring may be interesting, but in the end it is tangential to the policy question: If some suffering patients believe they can find comfort in smoking dope, and they don't interfere with anyone else, what legitimate interest does the state have in prosecuting them?

■ Those lovable grannies! Who? Read the *New York Times*, which ran two gushing stories on 18 older women who were arrested for blocking the door of the military recruitment center in Times Square last fall. They're sprightly and feisty—"Listen to your granny, she knows best," cried one when the charges were dismissed. Then, way, way down, amidst the knitting and the hair pins of the second story, we read that "some of [them] dated their political activism to the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg." Would the *Times* have underplayed it if "some" grannies "dated their political activism" to the German-American *Bund*? Remember to ask yourself the next time Stalin's Old Gals get a big wet one from the paper of record.

■ Chinese president Hu Jintao, standing on the south lawn of the White House with President Bush, was heckled by a protester objecting to China's persecution of Falun Gong. This moment captured something of the contradiction of modern China. On one hand, its powerful military and growing economy make it impossible to ignore and undesirable to alienate. On the other, it brutally suppresses political opposition, denies its people freedom of religion and expression, and acts irresponsibly on a range of security issues—as witness its insouciance over Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs and its bellicosity toward Taiwan. Dealing with China, then, is no easy thing. But President Bush has gotten it basically right. He knows that trade has been beneficial to both countries and he has resisted protectionist outcries, recognizing that our trade deficit has little to do with China's "depressing" its currency, and that the deficit will fall as Chinese wages rise. At the same time, he hasn't been shy about showing muscle on security issues—whether by slapping sanctions on Chinese companies that violate proliferation rules or by counterbalancing Beijing with stronger ties to other regional powers. The wisest long-term strategy is to promote the economic conditions that will lead China's people to exact liberal reforms from their government, while in the meantime maintaining the military capacity to deter any aggression. We're on the right track.

■ Dahab is a tiny seaside resort on the Egyptian shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, with a beach of fine white sand and a coral reef. Bombers struck three business establishments there, killing 18 people and injuring many more. In separate incidents over the last year and a half, bombers in this Sinai region have taken the lives of at least 125 people. The Egyptian government has no idea who these perpetrators are, but accuse the local Bedouin tribesmen. The Bedouin, it is true, resent the way the government has exploited them in the manganese mines and the Sinai oil fields, but why would the Bedouin want to wreck the tourism increasingly supporting their economy? The business establishments in Dahab were owned by Christian Copts, and the bombings occurred over the Coptic Easter. It hardly requires Sherlock Holmes to deduce that the bombers are most likely to be Muslim fanatics. For President Hosni Mubarak, the cloud certainly had a

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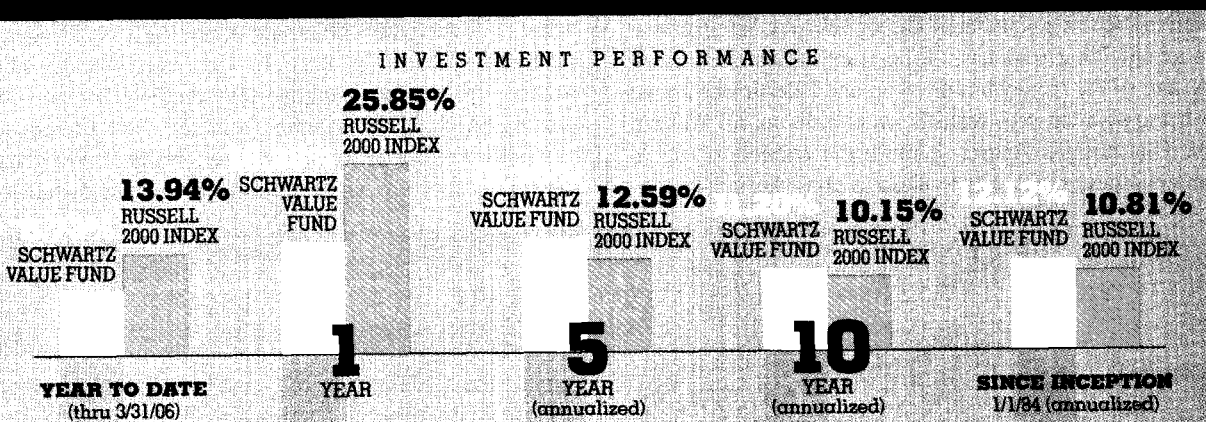

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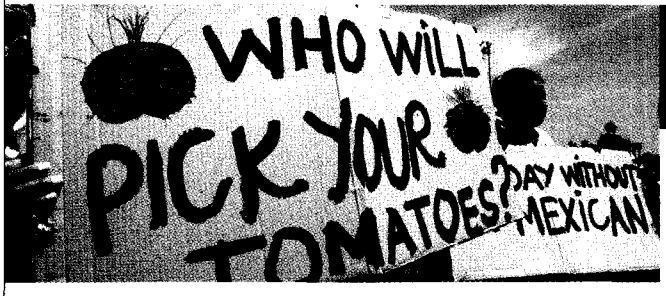
silver lining. He quickly saw his chance to extend the rule by emergency law that has been in operation for the 25 years of his hold on power. Civil-rights groups in Cairo estimate that some 15,000 people are currently detained in prison without charges. Between them, the bombers and Mubarak are making sure there is very little room for democracy.

■ The Palestine Authority is spiraling toward paralysis, chaos, or worse. Its president, Mahmoud Abbas, represents the nationalist PLO, but its elected government is drawn exclusively from the Islamist Hamas, and the jockeying for power between these two movements is driving events in a cockeyed fashion. Abbas proposes to negotiate with Israel, but then can't bring himself to condemn the recent suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. International donors are unwilling to sponsor the open and defiant terrorists of Hamas, and so the money has dried up and Palestinians are no longer being paid, or to be realistic about it, living off Western charity. This obliges Hamas to rattle the collection cup in Muslim countries, and Abbas to plead to non-Muslims to contribute as before. What sort of a two-step is this ? In the manner of the Delphic oracle, Abbas utters phrases that might mean that when things really get out of hand he'll be willing to dissolve the recently elected parliament. Gaza isn't Baghdad yet, but gunmen are gathering in the shadows and Abbas hasn't much time left to show what he is made of.

■ You can't get away from the topic of immigration nowadays. Here comes aging falsetto folk-rock singer Neil Young with a ditty in which he urges us to impeach President Bush. Sample: "Let's impeach the president for lying, / And leading our country into war; / Abusing all the power that we gave him, / And shipping all our money out the door . . ." You get the idea. What's this got to do with immigration? Well, Neil Young is not a U.S. citizen. He's Canadian. He can't even vote. He's been in America for 40 years, and has never bothered to take out citizenship. And this interloper from the land of moose and Mounties is telling *us* to impeach *our* president! For goodness' sake. If it's not Mexican fence-jumpers trying to dictate legisla-



FRED GREAVES/REUTERS

Götterdämmerbust

WELL, that was a letdown. The "Day without Immigrants" protest, timed to coincide with the socialist holiday of May Day, turned out to be one of the greatest fizzled-out Götterdämmerungs since Y2K. While some media outlets raised the prospect of "crippling" shutdowns throughout the American economy, the real effects amounted to little more than a long weekend for some workers. My wife reported that the produce section at the local high-end grocery store was a "shambles." Several National Review Online readers said that their local burrito joints were closed for the day. Of course, that's not the way it will be remembered. Too much has been invested in the *idea* of the walkout to risk permitting the petty bean-counters of reality to discount its impact.

There's a glorious irony here. Across America, the Left has rediscovered one of its holiest ideas: The Myth of the General Strike. For generations the General Strike—or as some Mexicans are calling it, the *Paro General*—lay at the heart of virtually all "revolutionary" theories. The basic idea is pretty simple: If the proletariat and other "producers" refuse to show up for work, then the wheels of the imperialist-capitalist order will grind to a halt, the ruling classes will take out their guns and try to force the slave-laborers back to work, and, when the smoke from the ensuing class war and anarchy clears, the masses will control the means of production.

In 1908, Georges Sorel, a French engineer turned philosopher, introduced his theory of the Myth of the General Strike in *Reflections on Violence*. He argued that it did not matter whether a general strike would actually result in apocalyptic doom for the capitalist overlords, and it did not matter whether the clash would usher in utopian bliss. It was vital, however, that the masses believe as much. The idea that the workers of the world could, by simply laying down their hammers, destroy the entire edifice and foundation of Western Civilization was a noble lie that would drive mankind *toward* the sunny uplands of history. The anarchy, bloodshed, and rebellion wouldn't bring about nirvana but, hey, it'd be progress.

The Machiavellian rationale behind the Myth of the General Strike inspired both Mussolini and Lenin. The actual myth inspired millions of socialist, Communist, anarchist, and fascist true believers to blow up police stations and railroads—even while it inspired others to push non-violently for their respective causes.

Aware of it or not, a similar faith underpinned the Day without Immigrants. *A Day without a Mexican*, an over-hyped documentary imagining America suddenly bereft of Mexican laborers and therefore thrown into anarchic incompetence, is an apt, though slightly racist, expression of the Sorelian vision. Indeed, the entire immigration debate is predicated on the widespread conviction that capitalism depends on a surplus army of lumpen, exploitable Mexican peasants. Pull out that carpet, and the whole system crashes down.

The amusing part is that when the theory was put to the test the other week, America—never mind global capitalism—didn't grind to a halt. Rather, the exploitative capitalist ruling class met with little more than a few inconveniences. Instead of the capitalist pillars crashing down, most bourgeois American workers found it a bit more difficult to drive to work, and they had to wait until Tuesday for their wastepaper baskets to be emptied. But, as Sorel would surely argue, that hardly matters. What counts is that the Myth is back.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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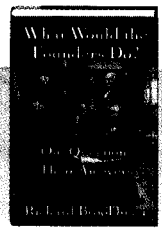

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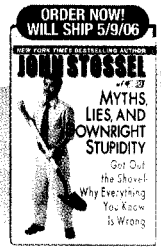

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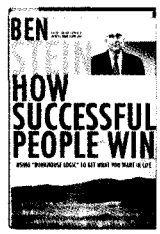

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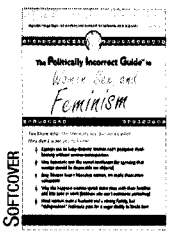

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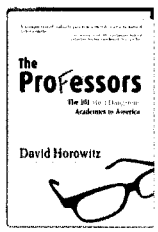

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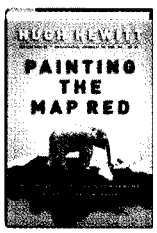

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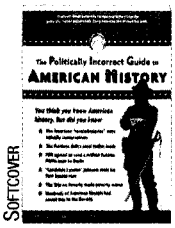

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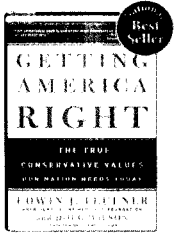

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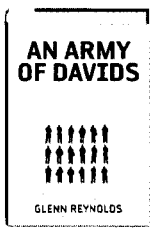

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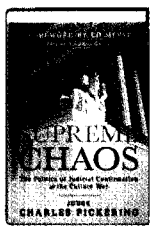

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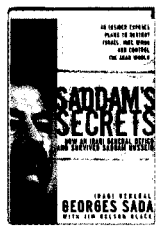

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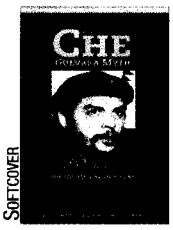

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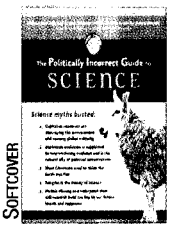

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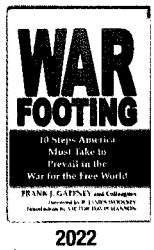

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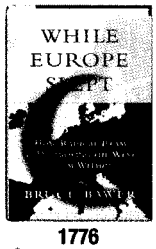

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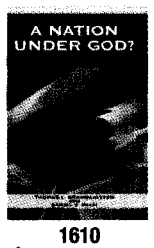

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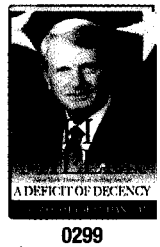

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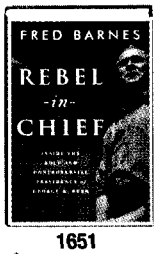

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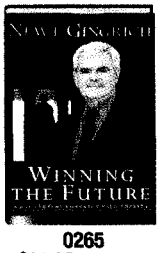

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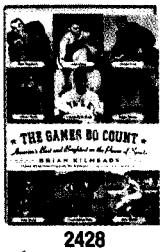

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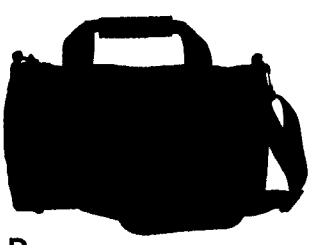

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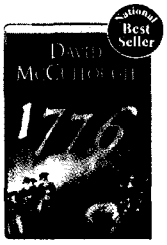

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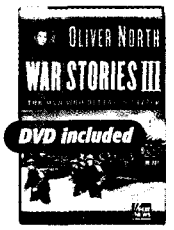

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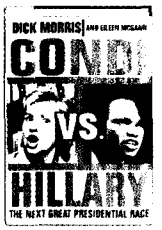

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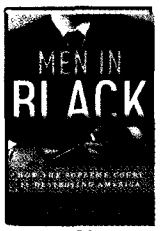

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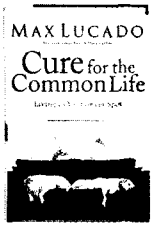

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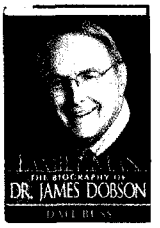

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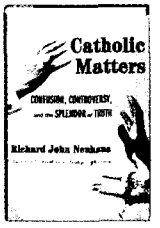

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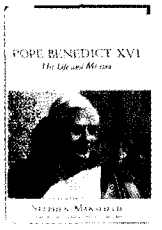

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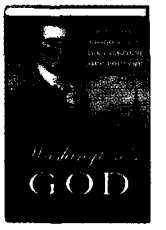

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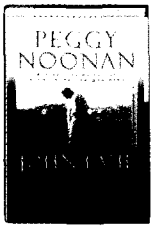

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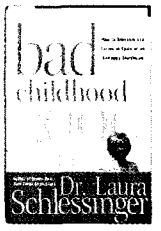

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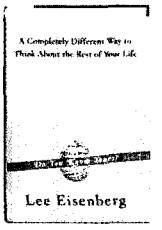

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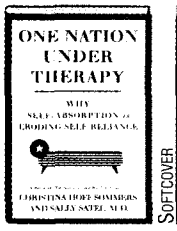

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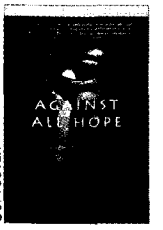

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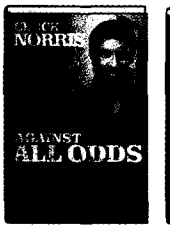

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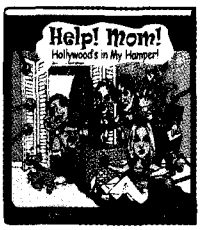

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THE WEEK...

tion to us, it's fur trappers from the wilds of Ontario insulting our head of state. America's business is everyone's business, it seems. Here, perhaps, at last, is useful work for some enterprising American leftist to do: record a song calling for the impeachment of Neil Young's head of state, which would be Her Britannic Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second. Britain's fighting in Iraq too, after all.

■ Allan MacDonell has written a memoir of the 20 years he worked for *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt. In an interview with the *New York Times*, MacDonell recalled various high points, including his wedding, at which his mother-in-law, "a devout Roman Catholic," met Flynt and found him "so charming he reminded her of Ted Kennedy." The senator is up for reelection this year, but we doubt he will use that.

■ The smallest species of penguin is *eudyptula minor*, native to New Zealand and southern Australia. The prosaic New Zealanders refer to these creatures as little blue penguins, but to the more romantically inclined people of Australia they are fairy penguins. Succumbing to a sudden spasm of political correctness, managers at the Sea World theme park near Brisbane have changed "fairy penguin" to "little penguin" in all their literature and signs, for fear that homosexuals might find the original term offensive. But are homosexuals really that sensitive Down Under? The chairman of a local gay support group was quoted thus: "If the penguins were called 'poofter penguins' or something more direct, then it might be a problem, but I don't see the name fairy penguin as a mickey-take at all." We think that means he doesn't mind.

■ The Juilliard School premiered a new opera, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, by Lowell Liebermann. It is based, of course, on the 1933 novella by Nathanael West. The opera, like the novella, is very dark, not to say brutal: It features fornication, perversion, assault, madness, murder. A sign was posted at the entrance of Juilliard's auditorium, issuing a warning. And what did it say? "Please be advised, gunshots and herbal cigarettes will be used in this performance." Yes, gunshots and herbal cigarettes. If that was not a sign of these times, not one has ever existed. We hope that dear Juilliard didn't get sued!

■ Jane Jacobs was not a conservative in the conventional sense—a native of Scranton, Pa., she opposed the Vietnam War and moved to Toronto in 1968—but there was something positively Burkean about her love of neighborhoods. Her most influential book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, is a bracing and witty attack on central planners who level urban communities with wrecking balls to make way for large-scale government projects. (Several years ago, an NR panel named *Death and Life* one of the hundred best non-fiction books of the 20th century.) She was a lifelong critic of eminent domain; a year and a half ago, she put her name on a brief that unsuccessfully urged the Supreme Court to curtail abuses in the *Kelo* case. Yet her vision of the modern city always carried a whiff of utopianism. An advocate of densely packed populations, she abhorred the suburbs even as many Americans came to prefer big backyards and safe streets. When she didn't like something, she asserted, sometimes abrasively, that nobody else should like it either. Despite these faults, she possessed a keen understanding of what makes cities tick and how to keep them livable. She died on April 25 at the age of 89. R.I.P.

■ Jean-François Revel was France's most prominent intellectual, earning the right to a place along with the great French writers of the past. Whether writing about philosophy, politics, international affairs, literature, or art, he was always a free spirit. And what skill and wit he showed, what a polemical punch he packed, when he came to deal with the many around him with closed minds. Communism was a lie, and his analysis of how and why so many people could believe the lie was the basis of several of his most telling books. He feared that there was some general disposition to surrender to what he called "the totalitarian temptation." A civilization, he emphasized, has to have the energy and will to defend itself. Many Frenchmen were shocked that he found this energy and will in the United States, and much admired it, while at the same time fearing that the countries of Europe, including his own, were decadent. With French presidents from de Gaulle onward, he was merciless. To tell the truth as he saw it was all that mattered, and he left his critics to go jump in the Atlantic. The world is a grimmer, grayer place without him. R.I.P.

AT WAR

Forward

THE selection of a compromise prime minister in Iraq is a major victory for that country's fledgling political class, and for the Bush administration. Purveyors of doom on Iraq now have some explaining to do: If the country is in the midst of a full-scale civil war fatal to our project there, how is it that elected representatives of the major factions were able to sit down and hammer out an agreement on the top positions in a national-unity government?

The deal on the prime minister brings within reach the Bush administration's long-term goal of creating a government that includes all Iraqi factions, getting Sunni parties into the political process once and for all. The hope is that this will reduce violence by dragging elements of the Sunni insurgency into legitimate politics as well.

The negotiations over a prime minister were messy, dragged on too long, and represented a loss of momentum from the triumph of the December 15 elections. But the final result is welcome. The notoriously ineffective prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who two months ago had narrowly won the endorsement of the Shiite parties to stay in office, is out of the job. He was backed by the thug-cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who engaged in a power struggle with the U.S. over whether Jaafari would stay in power and—crucially—lost. The Shiite coalition slowly realized that Jaafari was a non-starter given the opposition of the U.S. and Kurds and Sunnis, and picked another candidate, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

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Maliki has a reputation as an experienced, skilled politician, but obviously has significant challenges ahead. It is vital that clean and effective officials be put in charge of the ministries of defense and interior (the latter has responsibility for the police). While progress has been made in reconstituting an Iraqi army, the police are still in disarray, infiltrated by Shiite thugs.

Meanwhile, two prominent Democrats have offered ill-considered alternatives to the Bush policy. John Kerry thinks we should give the Iraqis until May 15 to settle on a full government and, if they don't meet the deadline, pull out immediately. The deadline, of course, is arbitrary—why should it be of the utmost importance to us that the Iraqis fill out the rest of their government by May 15 instead of May 21? Such a deadline would only give the radical forces that want us out—like Sadr—more reason to obstruct a political settlement so they can hoist us on our own deadline.

Joseph Biden endorses a kind of soft breakup of Iraq into Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite autonomous zones. This isn't necessarily an outlandish idea, but moving in that direction wouldn't make our task in Iraq much easier. What do you do with Baghdad, a sprawling, multiethnic city that can't be easily separated along sectarian lines? Biden says his Iraqi autonomous regions would need "a viable central government in Baghdad." Fine, but that would require just the sort of hard political and security work we are undertaking now. And even if the Sunnis got their own autonomous region in al-Anbar, we would never want to allow it to be overrun by jihadists, meaning we would still have to provide security until such time as Iraqi units were capable of providing it themselves.

There is no getting around the fact that the current political process in Iraq is the key to the country's political future. Even if the nationalist element of the insurgency begins to weaken, the foreign jihadists aren't going away, and will continue their savage attempts to foment a civil war. The problems with Iraq's economy and infrastructure, exacerbated by the violence, will also endure. But as long as Iraqi leaders are willing to compromise, and—however haltingly—to point the country forward, the catastrophic collapse sought by the terrorists won't happen.

IMMIGRATION

Their *Himno*, and Ours

CONGRESS wants to pass an illegal-immigration bill before Memorial Day, in the face of the confusion of the White House, and the self-confidence of lawbreakers.

President Bush, deep in the hole of bad premises and sentimentality, keeps digging. In a speech in Irvine, Calif., he tried to blur the issue by beating a straw man. "Massive deportation of the people [already] here is unrealistic. . . . You can hear people out there hollering it's going to work. It's not going to work." What Bush refuses to hear are the sensible calls, not for a roundup of 11 (or 16, or who knows how many) million illegals, but for a strategy of attrition. Secure the borders, crack down on employers, and the cost of being illegal in America will rise. As that happens, the inflow will diminish, until it falls below the natural rate of outflow. Illegal aliens are not ordinary contraband, like drugs, or booze during Prohibition—inert substances made to be consumed. The illegal immigrant must survive over time in a foreign environment. The more unfriendly it becomes, the less incentive he has to make the attempt.

Even as Bush sowed confusion, he had a specious moment of clarity. Reacting to "Nuestro Himno," the Spanish-language "Star-Spangled Banner" that has become the unofficial fight song of illegal immigrants, the president said, "I think the national anthem ought to be sung in English, and I think people who want to be . . . citizen[s] of this country . . . ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English." Why? Aren't they only singing songs Americans will not sing for themselves? Bush falls back on the rhetoric, high-sounding but witless, of open-borders assimilationists: Let everyone come to the party, but make them all Americans. Some illegals no doubt have that desire, and much assimilation occurs willy-nilly. But the goal of a common culture, or even common cultural landmarks, becomes unreachable in times of sustained mass immigration, much of it the work of lawbreakers.

As Bush floundered, illegal immigrants and their supporters showed their determination. The promised economic shutdown on May 1, when illegal immigrants were asked to stay home, did not happen, and the big-city rallies, though large, did not exceed the celebrations for local sports heroics. But hundreds of thousands of people, nominally on the lam, felt free to ape the civil-rights and anti-war protests of an earlier generation, which, however misguided, were the work of Americans disputing the policies of their government. These were housebreakers trying to rearrange the furniture. The Mexican flags of earlier demonstrations reappeared alongside Old Glory, a fitting symbol of Mexico itself muscling its way northward.

Other actors on the political scene made their contributions. The Department of Homeland Security announced a crackdown on a pallet-supply company headquartered in Houston, rounding up almost 1,200 illegals nationwide. The beginning of real enforcement, or window-dressing? Given Bush's lack of firmness, one fears the worst. The voters have noticed Bush's weakness and linked it to the GOP. A Rasmussen poll, presenting a three-way presidential race in 2008 between a generic Republican, a generic Democrat, and a third-party candidate who promised to build a Great Wall of Arizona and

IT'S ABOUT VOTES

Oh say can you see if Pelosi
Is waving the Mexican flag?
They're singing the anthem in Spanish,
And folks are beginning to gag.
The Congress keeps heeing and hawing;
The White House is clearly in pain.
The Alamo: Do they remember?
Heck, no one remembers the Maine.

—W. H. VON DREELE

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make immigration enforcement his "top priority," showed the Democrat squeaking to victory with 31 percent, over the immigration tough guy at 30 percent, while the Republican trailed at 21 percent. Spin those numbers, Mr. Rove.

The Senate, buffeted by big egos and windy principle, has been trying to craft a solution in the manner of the White House, combining some version of amnesty for illegals already here with tougher enforcement (the latter policy vitiated by the former). The House, traditionally the most responsive body, has been holding out for enforcement first. That is the way the Republican party must go, unless Bush is to drag it to destruction.

ENERGY

Gaseous

AND we thought the GOP was the party of free markets. Not when it comes to energy policy. We've heard Denny Hastert and Bill Frist demanding an investigation of potential oil-industry "price gouging"; Arlen Specter singing the praises of "windfall taxes" on oil companies; and even President Bush promising to look for "illegal manipulation or cheating related to the current gasoline prices."

While such demagoguery probably isn't a bad way to score political points, it makes the GOP look either deeply cynical or economically illiterate. There's this thing called "supply and demand." Gas is expensive right now because supply disruptions (and fears of future supply disruptions) have caused a spike in crude-oil prices. Oil-company "gouging" has precisely nothing to do with this phenomenon; in fact, it doesn't even exist. The oil and gas sectors' current profit margins are comparable to those of other industries, hovering slightly below 10 percent. Historically, they have actually been lower than profit margins in the economy at large. Slapping a "windfall tax" on oil companies now would amount to telling them that they must suffer losses during lean years but can't make up for them in fatter ones.

That's unfair, but it's also bad policy. Oil companies are willing to make the huge capital investments associated with exploration and drilling because they have a reasonable expectation that the market will reward them. Diminish that expectation and you diminish the amount of oil flowing from U.S.-owned wells. Then we're back to that whole "supply and demand" thing: Supply goes down, price goes up. This isn't just theory; it's exactly what happened when lawmakers meddled in energy markets during the 1970s.

Only slightly less absurd is the idea of a federal rebate of $100 to every taxpayer. (Where will this money come from, if not taxpayers?) And raising fuel-economy standards for SUVs—which is also being proposed—would simply force consumers to drive smaller, less safe cars while doing nothing to address the supply problems that keep oil expensive.

If Congress really wanted to help, it could start by lifting its protectionist tariffs on ethanol, a gasoline additive. Ethanol could be imported cheaply from Brazil and other cane-growing countries, but Congress has preferred to keep it expensive to favor Midwestern corn-growers, from whose crops it is also made. Congress could boost domestic supply by allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and exploration on the continental shelves off the coasts, and by streamlining the onerous regulatory process that has kept the U.S. from building a single new refinery since 1976. And it could reduce the number of city-specific requirements for gasoline blends, which make us vulnerable to price spikes, since a shortage in one city can't be offset by shipping in gas from another city.

None of these things would give voters that special frisson of hearing politicians beat up on an unpopular industry. But they would have the virtue of making gasoline cheaper over the long term. We suspect that's something voters would like even more.

OBITUARY

John Kenneth Galbraith, R.I.P.

I FILE this story, remarking the death of John Kenneth Galbraith, only with the forbearance of the editors of NATIONAL REVIEW. I draw deep into the forbearing capital I have accumulated in this journal by writing so personal an account of his life. It pleases me that he knew the value I placed on his friendship, which here impels something of a corruption of my duties.

The public Galbraith I knew and contended with for many years is captured in the first paragraph of my review of his 1992 book, *The Culture of Contentment*. I wrote then: "It is fortunate for Professor Galbraith that he was born with singular gifts as a writer. It is a pity he hasn't used these skills in other ways than to try year after year to bail out his sinking ships. Granted, one can take satisfaction from his anti-historical exertions, and wholesome pleasure from his yeomanry as a sump-pumper. Indeed, his rhythm and grace recall the skills we remember having been developed by Ben-Hur, the model galley slave, whose only request of the quartermaster was that he be allowed every month to move to the other side of the boat, to ensure a parallel development in the musculature of his arms and legs. I for one hope that the next time a nation experimenting with socialism or Communism fails, which will happen the next time a nation experiments with socialism or Communism, Ken Galbraith will feel the need to explain what happened. It's great fun to read. It helps, of course, to suppress wistful thought about those who endured, or died trying, the passage toward collective living to which Professor Galbraith has beckoned us for over forty years, beguiling the subliterate world, here defined as those whose knowledge of what makes the world work is undeveloped, never mind that many of them have Ph.D.s."

So it is said, for the record; and yet we grieve, those of us who knew him. We looked to his writings not for his social indenture to a progressive state, but for the work of a penetrating mind who turned his talent to the service of his ideals. This involved waging war against men and women who had, under capitalism, made strides in the practice of industry and in promoting the common good. Galbraith denied them the tribute to which they were entitled. It was bad enough, for him, that some

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Americans contributed to the commonweal the fruit of their industry. When they went further and offered their intellectual insights, Galbraith was unforgiving. Prof. Arthur Laffer, the idiomatic godfather of supply-side economics, Galbraith dismissed as if his work were of zero interest. His appraisal of such intellectual dissenters from his ideas of the common good derived from the psaltery of his moral catechism, cataloguing the persistence of poverty, the awful taste of the successful classes, and the wastefulness of the corporate and military establishments.

He dismisses conflicting notions with a wonderful contempt. "It is not clear that anyone of sober mentality took Professor Laffer's curve and conclusions seriously," Galbraith writes. Watch now the mortal dig: "He must have credit, nonetheless, for showing that justifying contrivance, however transparent, could be of high practical service." Where Mr. Galbraith is not easily excusable is in his search for disingenuousness in such as Charles Murray, a meticulous scholar of liberal background, whose *Losing Ground* is among the social landmarks of the postwar era. "In the mid 1980s," Galbraith writes, "the requisite doctrine needed by the culture of contentment to justify their policies became available. Dr. Charles A. Murray provided the nearly perfect prescription . . . Its essence was that the poor are impoverished and are kept in poverty by the public measures, particularly the welfare payments, that are meant to rescue them from their plight." Whatever Murray's modifications, "the basic purpose of his argument would be served. The poor would be off the conscience of the comfortable, and, a point of greater importance, off the federal budget and tax system."

One needs to brush this aside and dwell on the private life of John Kenneth Galbraith. I know something of that life, and of the lengths to which he went in utter privacy to help those in need. He was a truly generous friend. The mighty engine of his intelligence could be marshaled to serve the needs of individual students, students manqué, people who had a problem. Where he would not yield was in intellectual and social perspective. I had a letter from him a week before he died, pressing a point he had made orally when we last visited a few weeks ago. He added: "Nothing, of course, gives me more pleasure than lecturing on the nature of true conservatism."

Two or three weeks ago he sent me a copy of a poll in which he and his accomplishments were rated by the academic economics profession. He was voted the third most influential economist of the 20th century, after Keynes and Schumpeter. I think that ranking tells us more about the economics profession than we have any grounds to celebrate, but that isn't the point I made in acknowledging his letter. I had received, only a day or two before, a book about the new prime minister of Canada, Mr. Stephen Harper, in which NATIONAL REVIEW and its founder are cited as the primary influences in his own development as a conservative leader. But I did not mention this to Galbraith either. He was ailing, and this old adversary kept from him loose combative data which would have vexed him.

I was one of the speakers at his huge 85th-birthday party at the Boston Public Library. My four-minute talk was interrupted halfway through by the master of ceremonies. "*Is there a doctor in the house?*" The acoustics at the library were bad, and the next day I sent Galbraith the text of my talk. A week later I had his acknowledgment. It read: "Dear Bill: That was a very pleasant talk you gave about me. If I had known it would be so, I would not have instructed my friend to pretend, in the middle of your speech, to need the attention of a doctor."

Forget the whole thing, the getting and spending, and the Nobel Prize nominations, and the economists' tributes. What cannot be forgotten by those exposed to it is the amiable, generous, witty interventions of this man, with his singular wife and three remarkable sons, and that is why there are among his friends those who weep that he is now gone.

—WFB

notes & asides

■ *Many years ago (about 1956), the* New York Times *began to feature frequent articles by someone denominated as "McCandlish Phillips." Well,* NATIONAL REVIEW *had earlier published a satire by John M. Phillips, but the new name at the* Times *caught on and JMP made illustrious headway in journalism.*

And then one day he quit—still a young man—in order to serve his muse, who was also his Maker. He did not write again for decades, and so it was a welcome surprise to receive from him, for publication, a rueful essay on the Social Security issue. We publish it here, with warm welcome to the son departed for so long.

Mr. Bush Is—or He Was—Dead Right on Social Security. Here's Why, by John M. Phillips

Allow me first to tell you two reasons why I am not rich, and why I have no proper business being a Republican, except maybe as a kind of Chaplinesque window-gazing at the well-to-do in postures of pathetic yearning. Suffice it to say that I had one year in my 40s, after I left newspaper reporting, when my total income from all sources fell short of $6,000, another came in at not quite $9,000, and several later at $10,000 to $14,000 until I reached a stable annual income of $22,256 per year—all before taxes. In 2002, I finally hit an all-time peak near $40,000, so do not weep for me.

But these facts have nothing whatever to do with why I am not rich. (They do have to do with why I was so long poor.)

That crime must be laid first, and posthumously, at the feet of my paternal grandfather, the prosperous head of the New England Steam Gauge and Valve Company near Boston. He was rich enough to roll about, mostly to New York and back, in his private railroad car.

A day came when he allowed to be admitted to his office a young man seeking startup capital and bearing a newfangled gadget. His eager visitor had, he explained, devised a new way for men to shave—not with the classic straight

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razor, but with his metallic gadget. Its very singular feature was that it had a removable, disposable blade.

He needed $10,000 to get it into production, and would give a 49 percent interest in his enterprise for that capital. My grandfather agreed to take the little contraption home overnight and shave with it.

After doing so, he called the young man into his office and handed him back his invention. It was not, he said, a successor to the ever-reliable, strop-hungry straight razor. Then he showed Mr. King C. Gillette—and virtually the whole future history of male shaving—out the door.

My grandfather thus kept his $10,000 safe from wild proliferation—and his heirs, notably me, from becoming megamillionaires.

The second reason why I am not rich is not my fault. I blame it on anyone, everyone, who knew, when I was about age 24, what I had to know at that age to become rich, but failed to tell me. Grievously so.

I was for decades a true innocent regarding everything having to do with money, but I got just a hint of this—not enough to fully clue me in—when, in my economic stringency, I mustered up the guts to put some money into a mutual fund, having been told by a salesman who visited a friend one afternoon in my presence that it was a good idea.

Pity me that it was not until March 14, 1969, at age 41, that I wrote out a check for $160 on my Chemical Bank account for a stake in the Franklin Equity Fund. That was the first investment I had ever made outside of my passbook savings account.

Without knowing the slightest thing about it—and here I shout to absolutely everyone under 26 to pay me rapt attention—I had put my paltry hoard under the awesome Power of Compounding.

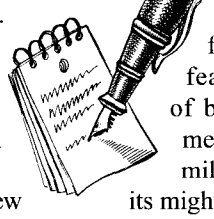
Mr. President, I know in my heart, my gut, and my mutual-fund balance that you are dead-on right about those private retirement accounts for Social Security. You are. You are. And those who don't admit it are fools or, more likely, political knaves.

Politicians, posing as friends of the aged, are sinking their prospect of enjoying a richer retirement than Social Security in its present form would ever be able to supply them—let alone the fact that it is sliding toward inevitable insolvency a generation or so ahead. The most devout defenders of Social Security as it is seem afflicted with the delusion that the system was inscribed on the back of one of the Tablets supplied to Moses on the Mount. So changing it is tantamount to blasphemy.

Oh! How I wish I had known enough to keep stuffing dollars into my little mutual-fund kitty, because my money has reproduced as though it had been tutored by a pack of panting rabbits.

Five years after I had made that initial plunge, I sent another check to Franklin, this one for all of $38—not in my case a negligible sum—bringing my total investment up to $198. I have never since added so much as a dime to that account. On April 25, 1994, having read that it had exceptionally able management, I ordered a fee-free switch of my account into the Franklin Balance Sheet Investment Fund.

My sole strategy—one that has turned me into a thimble-sized Warren Buffett—has been benign passivity. All I have done is let my $198 sit there, raking in little dividends once or twice a year, automatically accruing additional shares.



Almost immediately those new shares started raking in their own little dividends, buying me yet more shares, which turned right round and did the same thing in this magical, and magnificently powerful, cycle. I have kept all these records as evidence of my financial genius. Be honest now. How much do you think my fund account was worth at the close of 2005?

My statement for last December 31 shows a total dollar value of $5,052.29. In the latest 10 years, that fund has had seven strong up years, and three slight down years. How good is that? Had I been able to invest $1,000 at age 41, my holding would now stand at $25,510. Someone putting $10,000 in would now be enjoying the fruits of just over $255,000 for not having done much of anything but hold still while taking the trouble to breathe.

That's why I am convinced that President Bush has got it right on Social Security.

Am I saying that every $198 invested in private accounts would act that way? Of course not. But if such private money did only one-third as well, it would still exceed the return of Social Security as now constituted. Is there risk? Of course there is. But, over almost any period, put the results of money taken out of our pay for Social Security alongside money put into private investment accounts, and the latter will almost certainly exceed the former.

Mr. Bush knows actuarially that this is the route to richer retirement for millions of Americans. I know it, too. Would to heaven that I had known it at age 24, not when I was turning 65.

My plea is for the president's concept to be put to a strictly limited, real-time test over a term of about 20 years. I am fed up with a system whose loudest advocates, nearly worshipful in their veneration, seem haunted by the very terror of capitalism that was passed off as people-love in the Soviet Union for decades. We are *not* living in a Marxist bureaucracy that fears and despises free enterprise or the bounties that flow from it. We should not fear to give a modest measure of bridled capitalism—if by no means to all, at least to multiplied millions—some room to manifest its mighty power.

Looking at Social Security in a rear-view mirror gives no hint of the frightful crackup that lies ahead. More than 70 million "baby boomers" are starting now to march in phalanxes into retirement years.

The system worked well when 24 or more people were paying in for each one taking out. That happy scheme is ultimately doomed as the age-shift now occurring in our national population cuts, and then reverses, that ratio. The durability of the present setup is a dangerous illusion wrapped in an outright lie.

This fact cries out to be faced squarely, not when it pitches the overburdened system into the ditch—but now, or, at the outside, extremely soon. That's why I say, "Go, George, Go."

—WFB

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[W]e have to ask: Is it possible for the United States and its friends to agree on criteria for diplomatic initiatives to head off crises like the one we now face in North Korea and the one looming with Iran? And if the diplomatic initiatives fail in North Korea and Iran, and perhaps elsewhere in the future, will we be able to agree on criteria appropriate for imposing sanctions and, perhaps, eventually for initiating forceful actions against those who insist on moving ahead toward acquiring nuclear capabilities and are behaving aggressively? The experience at the United Nations leading up to the invasion of Iraq shows how difficult that challenge will be. A serious effort to come to such agreements will have to start by restoring and strengthening the international consensus against nuclear proliferation and defining clear responsibilities and authority for action by the UN Security Council.

—Sidney D. Drell

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The factors underlying disparities in treatment

Ultimately, improvement in the quality of care and self-care would elevate the status of minority health appreciably. But the greater public-health good would be served by applying these goals to all underserved people rather than focusing on minorities. By focusing on those with the worst health, the targets of intervention will still turn out to be poor minority groups but will include lower-class whites as well. For example, establishing screening (for cancer, diabetes, or hypertension) or wellness education programs in benighted areas such as southeast Washington, D.C., or the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles would benefit all residents and shrink overall racial differentials in health outcome.

—Sally Satel and Jonathan Klick

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■ THE WHITE HOUSE ■

Enter Tony Snow

The president gets a new press secretary

BYRON YORK

TONY SNOW knows when to dodge a question. Ask the new White House press secretary just what wasn't working in the West Wing, and why Josh Bolten, the new chief of staff, needed to overhaul the press operation, and Snow stays a mile away from controversy. "That one, for obvious reasons, I'm just gonna dodge," he says.

No one would really expect Snow, the popular radio host, Fox News anchor, and syndicated columnist, to spill any secrets about that. But the thing Snow understands is this: You can tell a reporter you're dodging his question and he might not like it, but he won't be mad. On the other hand, if you dodge the question while insisting that you are really answering it, he will be mad. And if you do that a lot, you've got a recipe for bad relations with the press. It's happened before.

The answer to the question that Snow didn't want to address is, of course, that the outgoing press secretary, Scott McClellan, was never a good fit as the president's spokesman. McClellan is by all accounts a good and decent man, and clearly loyal to George W. Bush, but he never had the sense of ease needed to handle intense questioning in the briefing room. Privately, he was easy to talk to, and as helpful as he could be inside a White House that didn't particularly like to deal with the press, but without that public manner, he sometimes appeared robotic as he repeated answers to questions—sometimes over and over and over.

Also, although McClellan never said it, one can read between the lines of some of his statements to see that he wasn't happy at being kept out of the loop on some important matters. For example, when Vice President Dick Cheney accidentally shot a fellow hunter in Texas, McClellan didn't know about it until after the decisions on how to deal with the press had already been made. When reporters wanted to know if top White House aides Karl Rove and Scooter Libby had played any role in the disclosure of CIA employee Valerie Plame Wilson's identity, McClellan gave reporters the answer he had been given: No. It later turned out that was wrong.

So there were really two problems in the spokesman's office. One, McClellan wasn't really right for the job, and two, he sometimes wasn't clued in on what was really going on. Add to that all the difficulties the Bush White House has experienced in the last year, and you've got the need for a new start.

That's where Tony Snow comes in. And it all happened by accident—sort of. Snow and Bolten knew each other from their days in the first Bush White House, when Snow was a speechwriter and Bolten was doing policy work. They didn't stay in touch through the Clinton years, but, not long ago, when Bolten was director of the Office of Management and Budget, Snow called him and said let's have lunch, let's catch up. Bolten agreed, but it took quite a while to find a time when both men would be free. The day they finally scheduled lunch in Bolten's OMB office turned out to be the day Bolten's appointment as chief of staff was announced. To anyone on the outside, it looked kind of, well, arranged, but Snow says it wasn't. "It was one of those incredible serendipity deals," he says.

When Snow's appointment was announced, it was met with pretty much universal praise, at least from Republicans. Even the way it was announced was an encouraging sign, as some in the GOP saw it.

In the past, the president had sprung some decisions on the public with no advance notice. This meant that, in instances such as the Harriet Miers Supreme Court nomination, the White House had no way to gauge public reaction ahead of time. But with Snow, word got out the old-fashioned way: It leaked

ROMAN GENN

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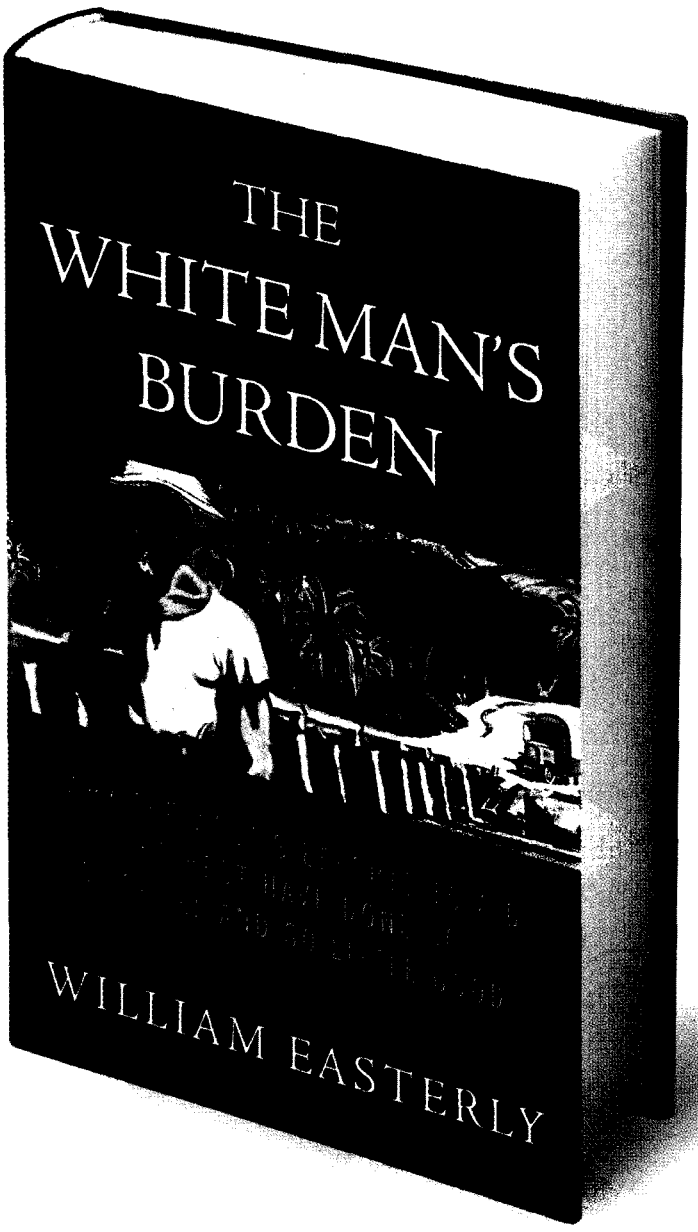

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out to the public, a little bit at a time, for several days. It was a traditional trial balloon, so uncharacteristic of a Bush appointment that some White House observers thought that Snow would never get the job. After all, anyone who talked about such things ahead of time, as Snow did, was sure to incur White House wrath, right? Wrong. In this case, the early reaction to Snow's appointment was good, and just got better as time went on. Snow was in.

The process left some Republicans smiling: Finally, the Bush White House has decided to make things a little easier on itself. But apparently there was no grand new plan. Word had just gotten out, leaving Snow himself feeling a little sheepish. "The first leak out of this White House and it's my name," he says.

Will Snow's appointment address the two problems that plagued McClellan? Well, Snow is certainly expected to be more deft and understanding in dealing with the press. He has been a reporter and knows what they need, even if he can't give it to them all the time. As far as being in the loop is concerned, Snow is said to have received assurances that he will be included in the policy-making process so that he can better explain it to the world. Although he won't confirm that himself, he did tell NATIONAL REVIEW, "The one thing I'm satisfied with is that I will have plenty of access and plenty of information so I can do my job right."

So what about the opposition? Democrats couldn't find much bad to say about the well-liked Snow. "The president's very lucky to have a man of Tony Snow's caliber take this job on," said Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois. "I think he's going to do an excellent job at maybe one of the toughest press jobs in America."

The administration's critics slipped up a bit when the Center for American Progress, the liberal think tank run by former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta, released a list of quotes from Snow's syndicated column in which Snow criticized the president—lots of times—from a conservative perspective. Among them were quotes in which Snow said Bush had "become something of an embarrassment" to Republicans running for office, that he had "lost control of the federal budget and cannot resist the temptation to stop raiding the public fisc," that he "has a habit of singing from the Political Correctness hymnal," and that he "has given the impression that [he] is more eager to please than lead, and that political opponents can get their way if they simply dig in their heels and behave like petulant trust-fund brats, demanding money and favor—now!"

No doubt this move was intended to make Snow and the White House uncomfortable, and perhaps to provoke some embarrassing questions in the briefing room. But instead, it had the effect of insulating the White House from one of the Left's most consistent criticisms: that George W. Bush won't tolerate dissent and isn't interested in hearing from anyone who doesn't agree with him. Seeing the president hire an outsider—and a sometime critic—made that line of criticism look a little silly. In this way, Podesta's outfit ended up doing the White House a favor.

So now Snow actually has to do the job. Even with his experience, there's a pretty steep learning curve. Snow told NATIONAL REVIEW that he has sought advice from several former White House press secretaries, including Mike McCurry, Marlin Fitzwater, George Stephanopoulos, and Joe Lockhart. At this early stage, though, he's busy just trying "to master the basic skills of doing the daily brief—those are the things that are kind of consuming me right now."

And one last thing. Snow was quite open with the public when he was diagnosed with colon cancer last year. After surgery, he was declared cancer-free, and he checked with his doctor again before deciding to take the White House job. Still, people have worried that the high-stress position might harm his health. He's not worried. "I was working six days a week before," he explains, citing the demands of his radio show, TV appearances, and column. "I wouldn't do this if it in any way compromised my health."

So now Snow is the new face of the Bush White House. He'll undoubtedly have a honeymoon, and then, when the first big bad thing happens—or maybe when there's one of those tempests in a teapot that periodically consume the White House press corps—he'll be tested under fire. No one can say what will happen, but White House officials are looking for better days in the briefing room. **NR**

■ **EUROPE**

Democratic Muslims

Denmark's Naser Khader and his band

ANDREW STUTTAFORD

THE restaurant, unpretentious and vaguely chic, and the weather, cold and rainy, were as they should have been in northerly, elegant Copenhagen. The watchful plain-clothes policemen were not. These are strange, unsettling times in Denmark: quiet, orderly, peaceful, nothing-happens-here Denmark; hated, reviled, infidel, embassies-in-flames Denmark. I was having lunch with Naser Khader, a Syria-born member of the Danish parliament for the Social Liberals (the party of Denmark's metropolitan elite), a brave, engaging man who has discovered that, in today's Denmark, for a Muslim to speak his mind about Islamic extremism means immense popularity—he's probably the country's most acclaimed politician—and a life under police protection.

When we met he was emerging from the brief period of seclusion that followed the release of footage shot for French TV in which Ahmed Akkari, one of Denmark's militant imams (the very notion of militant imams in Denmark—*Denmark*—would have been ludicrous a decade or so ago), appeared to suggest that if Khader became a minister in the Danish government he should be blown up. It was, Akkari claimed later, a joke. Ha ha ha.

We live in a venomous, inflamed, and dangerous age, an era of barbarian zealotry and brutal piety in which twelve cartoons can trigger deaths by the score, and a twelve-minute movie can lead to ritual slaughter on the streets of Amsterdam. Under the circumstances, it's not so shocking that Akkari said what he did. It *was* surprising that his words were caught

Mr. Stuttaford is a contributing editor of National Review Online.

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45	$47	$110	$214
50	$75	$179	$353
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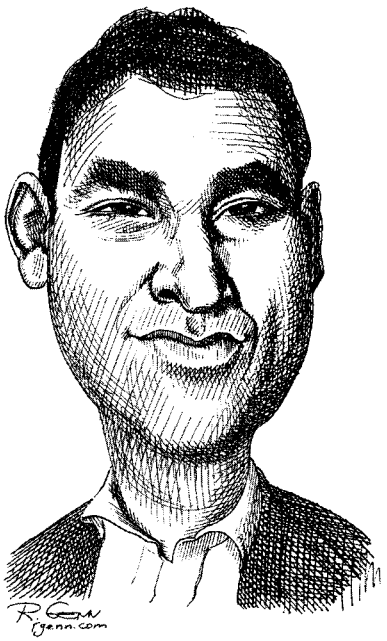
on tape. A more experienced provocateur—Akkari is only in his 20s—might have been more discreet. Perhaps the corpses, boycotts, and blazing embassies had gone to his head: After all, he's a big man now, one of the bright sparks who compiled and circulated the incendiary dossier designed to convince the Islamic world that there was indeed something rotten in the state of Denmark. As propaganda goes, that dossier, a ragbag of resentment, bombast, press clippings, and cartoons (including three truly grotesque—and genuinely blasphemous—images of conveniently mysterious provenance), was a poor, crude thing, but in our poisoned, poisonous world, it was enough to do the trick.

And a trick, a contrivance, a device to manufacture hysteria was what it was all about, something lost on those Western statesmen—if we can call them that—who were so quick to distance themselves from those pesky, tactless Danes. It was an act of abandonment that rankled just about everyone I spoke to in Denmark, a nation with troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Bill Clinton may be one of Khader's "heroes" (as I said, Naser Khader's party is the party of the metropolitan elite), but when it came to the cartoons, well, the Man from Hope "didn't know what he was talking about." And George W. Bush had been no better. To Khader, the U.S. president was "too much of a Muslim," more interested in defending religion than freedom of speech, a thought-provoking, if harsh, point of view.

As for Khader, the cartoons hadn't bothered him too much ("if you don't like them, don't buy the newspaper"). There had been "such cartoons before," and there hadn't been any trouble. The real significance of *Jyllands-Posten*'s impious portfolio was that it had appeared "at the right time, and in the right place" to be exploited by people who wanted to foment "confrontation," which could be milked for "money and support."

To grasp exactly why Khader thinks that "money and support" might be required, and by whom, is to glimpse a far darker future than conventional pessismism about Europe would have it. Given profound cultural differences, made even more difficult by continued mass immigration, integrating the continent's new Muslims minorities was never going to be easy, but as Khader sees it there are now those with a vested interest in making matters worse. He's not a believer in the much-advertised clash of civilizations, an idea with something of a bleak, tectonic inevitability to it, but in a different sort of conflict altogether: something more controlled, planned, and directed.

It's a conflict being promoted, Khader believes, by Islamists ("well organized," he argues, and established worldwide) set on "controlling Muslim society in the West." After that, the next objective will



Naser Khader

be to establish regimes more to their liking in the Muslim heartland. And then? "A global jihad. That's why we have to stop them now."

Khader has founded "The Democratic Muslims" to help do just that. It's typical Khader, high-minded, well-intentioned, a little grandiose, and put together with an eye for media appeal. A true champion of Enlightenment values, Khader is somewhat uneasy about having to define people by reference to their religion (his own religious beliefs, such as they are, seem to be more a matter of heritage than anything else), but he regards the formation of this group as a necessary corrective to the idea put about by Islamists that they alone represent the true voice of Denmark's Muslims. As Khader explains, the media will pay more attention to an organization than to any one individual ("they won't be able to say that I'm just speaking for myself"). Hitherto the most visible organized Muslims in the country have been the Islamists. Now there will be an alternative.

What's more, he notes, with perhaps a touch of his showman's hyperbole, "For the first time Danes can see that a Muslim is not a monster . . . and for the first time they can see Muslims saying that they are first Danes and democrats, and then Muslims." And, just for an instant, chatting to a civilized charmer over a civilized *frokost* in a civilized restaurant in a civilized city, it all seems very plausible—but then reality, as cruel as al-Qaeda, as cold as that Danish rain, reasserts itself: For all the goodwill that has attended its launch, the Democratic Muslims have reportedly attracted under a thousand recruits so far, a tiny fraction of the approximately quarter-million Muslims now living in Denmark (roughly 5 percent of the total population). Khader himself admits that most Danish Muslims want to keep out of the debate, to be "left alone."

That's believable. But while apathy, as an expression of people's interest in just getting on with their lives free from politics, can sometimes be encouraging, recent polling data are not. A March survey prepared by the Danish polling company Catinét purported to show that 11 percent of Denmark's Muslims "fully understood" those who thought that a handful of mildly satirical cartoons entitled them to trash an embassy or two. Two-thirds of those surveyed replied that Denmark's prime minister should apologize for those naughty drawings (a view also shared by some 20 percent of ethnic Danes, according to other polls). That response suggests that acceptance of the right of free expression has a way to go among many in the country's Muslim community.

That said, for all the difficulties there are some grounds for thinking that this small Scandinavian nation may be on the right track. The rise of the populist People's Party over the last ten years may have added to the sense of isolation felt by many Danish Muslims, but it has also led Denmark's center-right government to introduce some of the toughest immigration legislation in the EU: The result

ROMAN GENN

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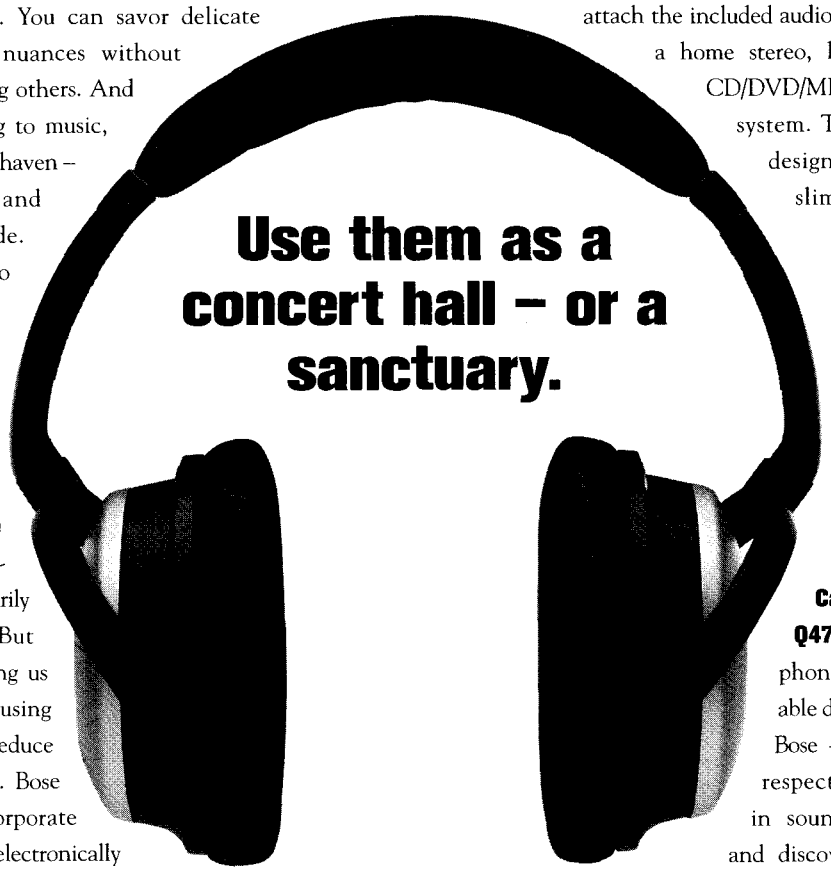

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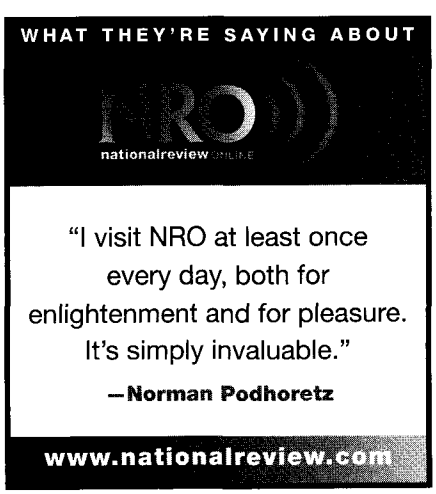
has been a sharp fall in the number of immigrants coming into the country, an essential precondition for the successful integration of those who are already there.

If diagnosing a problem is the first stage in its solution, then the cartoon crisis ought to have given Denmark a brutal lesson in the exact nature of the challenge it faces. The Islamist bombings in Madrid and London could—just—be put down to alienation, anomie, and chaotic religious rage, but the cartoon wars have, like the murder of Theo van Gogh or the persecution of Salman Rushdie, signaled the existence of a profoundly disturbing and ideologically driven assault on Europe's Enlightenment legacy.

Even so, Khader is not convinced that the message has gotten through. Akkari's "joke," he reckons, was nothing of the sort, but he doesn't expect any prosecutions to follow (and so far they haven't). When it comes to confronting the Islamist threat, Denmark is still, he complains, "very soft." The authorities are "waiting for victims"—Khader pauses as he says that, and the word "victims" hangs heavily in the air—"before they do anything." His wife, lively, attractive, and gracious, is with us at the table—I can only imagine what is going through her mind. The problem, he continues, is "naïveté" (tellingly, this most Danish of new Danes pronounces that French noun in a distinctly Danish manner). Danes simply "cannot imagine what kind of enemy we have to deal with."

Outside it's still gray, still overcast, but somehow it's no longer quite Denmark. **NR**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■ **THE MIDDLE EAST**

The Word On the Street

What do Arabs think?

RICHARD NADLER

THE reaction of the Arab street to the war in Iraq is well documented. But what the street says depends on which side of it is polled. The post-war optimism of most Iraqis contrasts with the deep skepticism that most non-Iraqi Arabs voice toward Operation Iraqi Freedom and its aftermath—a contrast that reflects the changing political reality of the Middle East. Iraqis, with their newfound freedom of expression and wide array of media, are getting a broader and more accurate view of the world than their politically oppressed neighbors, who hear a steady barrage of anti-American vitriol.

Surveys conducted by Zogby International between 2002 and late 2005 record opinion in six Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates. The post-war opinions of Iraqis have been measured by the International Republican Institute, the Gallup Organization, and Oxford Research International.

The differences are stark. According to Shibley Telhami, a senior fellow of the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy, non-Iraqi Arabs "essentially see Iraq through the prism of domestic anarchy and violence, through the prism of the U.S. presence which they don't like, and through the prism of the Sunnis, who are obviously worse off." In the six-nation sample, respondents consider Iraqis "worse off after the war" by a margin of 77 percent to 6 percent.

But Iraqis disagree. Most applaud the destruction of the Baathist regime. By 52 percent to 29 percent they rate their lives as better post-Saddam, and by 48 percent to 18 percent they expect their lives to improve over the next year. Asked, "Thinking about any hardships you might have suffered since the US-Britain invasion, do you personally think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it or not?" 77 percent answer "worth it." This includes 91 percent of the Kurds surveyed and 98 percent of Iraqi Shiites.

The Oxford Research International pollsters have explored the bases of Iraqi optimism. They found that a plurality of Iraqis consider their situation to have improved from Baathist days in terms of overall security, safety from crime, and freedom of speech. Pluralities also cite improvement in the availability of education, medical care, and basic household necessities.

The Arab street outside of Iraq considers the post-Saddam government illegitimate and undemocratic. In 2004, Zogby and Telhami asked non-Iraqis to characterize the handover of full sovereignty from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the interim government headed by Ayad Allawi. Sixty-five percent said the transfer was "cosmetic"; only 4 percent regarded it as "positive change." In a 2005 Zogby-Telhami poll, Arab respondents characterized the war as bringing less democracy rather than more by 58 percent to 9 percent.

These results are understandable when viewed in conjunction with another finding: Arabs outside of Iraq don't consider the U.S. particularly democratic. Asked to name countries that provide the "most freedom and democracy for their own peoples," Germany and France were both named more frequently than America, the latter by a margin of three to one.

By contrast, most Iraqis consider the new regime both legitimate and democratic. The idea of democratic government wins the assent of 74 percent of Iraqis polled. Sixty-six percent of Iraqis, including 89 percent of the majority Shiites, characterize the December parliamentary elections as "free and fair." Sixty-eight percent of Iraqis, including 81 percent of Kurds and 90 percent of Shiites, consider their parliament "the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people."

The surveys show that Iraqis want Coalition forces to leave—but no time soon. In a January 2006 poll, Iraqis pre-

Mr. Nadler is president of Americas Majority, a nonprofit think tank, and co-editor of Daily Dispatch, a military blog reporting on events in Iraq.

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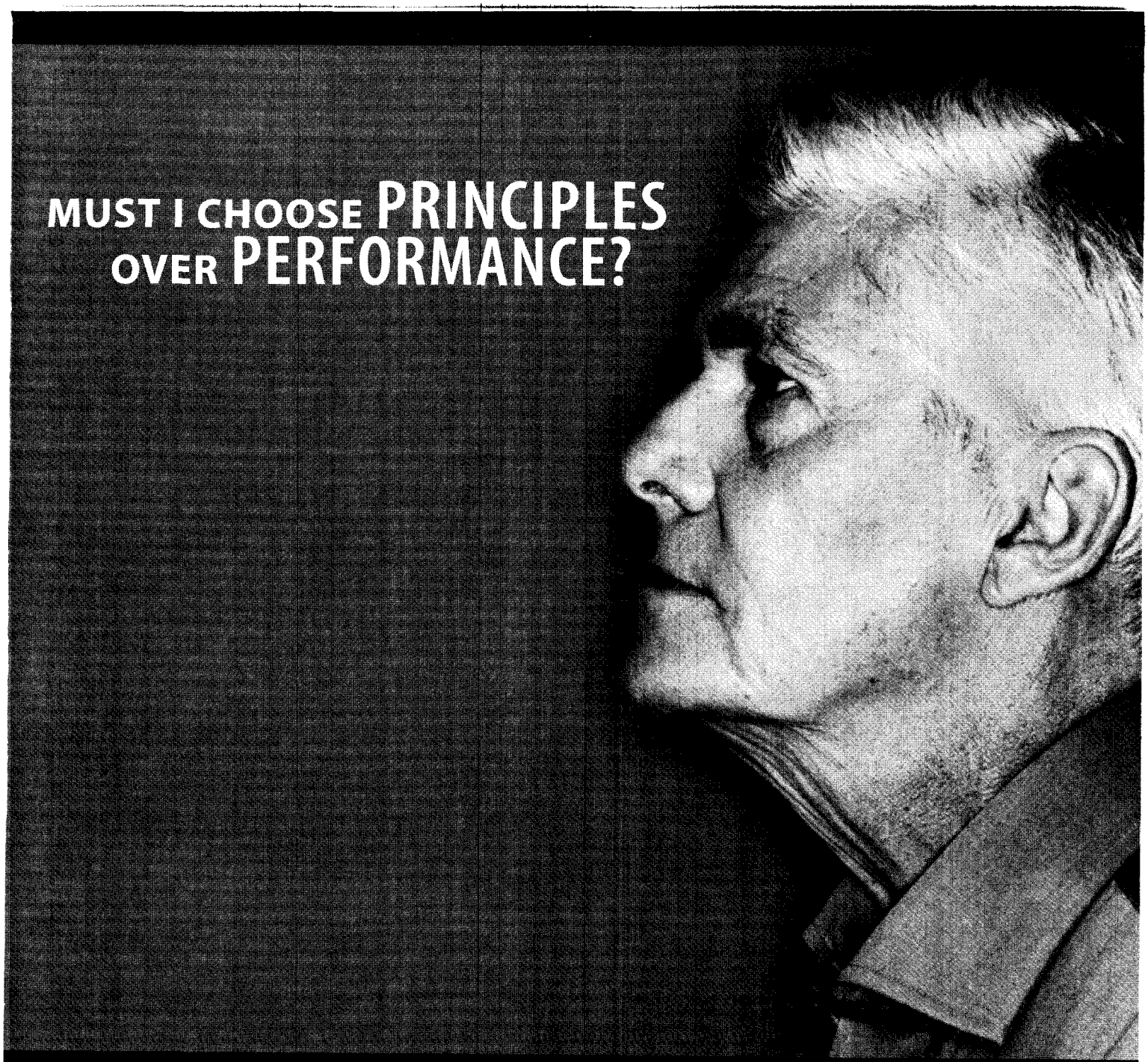

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ferred a withdrawal framework lasting two years or more to one of six months or less by 64 percent to 35 percent. Seventy-eight percent of Shiites and 85 percent of Kurds preferred the slower timetable.

Now an Arab in Rabat has no more personal experience of post-Baathist Iraq than a Hoosier in Terre Haute. The Arab street outside of Iraq is getting its information from somewhere, and it obviously isn't from Iraqis. What has caused this dichotomy between Iraqi optimism and wider Arab pessimism?

According to Zogby International, the primary font of information in the region is "Arab commentaries in Arab media." Among these, al-Jazeera, the Arabic TV-news station broadcast from Dubai, dominates the market. It is, says Telhami, "the first choice for news" of 45 percent of Arabs—and the second choice for most of the rest. It is the trusted source. There is no broadcast institution of similar reach in the English-speaking world.

Here's how al-Jazeera's news webpage described Operation Iraqi Freedom:

> U.S. and British occupation of Iraq is regarded as the re-emergence of the old colonialist practices of the western empires. . . . Will Iraq turn into a new Vietnam, eventually bringing the US to its senses . . . or perhaps to its knees? . . . In the past, enemies attacked from East and West before they were swallowed by the moving sands of the region, or forced to retreat, leaving behind a phoenix-like people who adore life and still accept to die for their freedom. . . . The escalating Iraqi resistance seems to be setting the stage for another act which might usher in a new Arab World or set the clock ticking for the end of yet another empire.

The Coalition forces are colonialists. The Baathist and al-Qaeda terrorists are freedom fighters. The "resistance" is escalating. A new Arab World beckons. Given that this is what most Arabs are hearing, should we be surprised that they answer poll questions the way they do?

In post-war Iraq, on the other hand, al-Jazeera's worldview has some competition. Iraqis are able to see the progress their country is making firsthand, even as it goes largely unreported in the pan-Arab media. In addition, Iraqi media are much more diverse than those of other states in the region. They have swelled from three TV stations, three radio stations, and ten newspapers—all state-owned—to 44 commercial TV stations, 72 commercial radio stations, and over 100 independent newspapers. Opinion ranges from apocalyptic Shiism to classical liberalism to Marxism-Leninism. Some of these papers are friendly to the Coalition forces; others publish screeds blaming the U.S. for any and every problem. In short, the Iraqi press is free.

In this atmosphere, al-Jazeera has earned the anger and contempt of Iraqi democrats of every persuasion. Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite, accused al-Jazeera of inciting hatred. Falah al-Naqib, the Sunni interior minister in the interim government, temporarily closed the station's Baghdad bureau (although its broadcasts from Dubai continued). He said that al-Jazeera had "agreed to become the voice of terrorist groups" and accused it of strengthening the position of kidnappers and hostage-takers.

Speaking before a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations on June 23, 2005, Allawi's successor and political opponent, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, said, "The problem that Jazeera has is not with the government; it is with the Iraqi people. . . . We on the inside in Iraq, we see Jazeera as an instrument of distortion. . . . Has Jazeera given credit or credibility or significance to the areas of mass graves? Why are only the negative aspects of Iraq aired on Jazeera TV?"

But al-Jazeera is simply a prominent manifestation of a much deeper problem in the Arab press. In a *Washington Post* op-ed entitled "How to Lose Your Job at a Saudi Newspaper," Fawaz Turki, longtime columnist for *Arab News*, described the three cardinal sins in Arab journalism: criticizing the government, criticizing Arab leadership, and criticizing Islam.

The legendary Arab Street—depends on which street you're on

PETER TURNLEY

"The Arab world today," Turki wrote, "sadly remains a collection of disparate entities ruled for the most part by authoritarian regimes that rely on coercion, violence and terror to rule, and that demand from their citizens submission, obedience and conformity. And that includes those citizens who call themselves 'journalists,' to whom, by now, responsibility to truth and logic has become irrelevant."

Thus the most feared Arab governments combine with the most trusted Arab media to create a wall of silence between the Arab masses and the revolution occurring next door in Iraq. The nature of this revolution is to change power relations, forcing rulers to accommodate their priorities to those of the governed in order to gain or retain power. And that is something no tyranny can afford. **NR**

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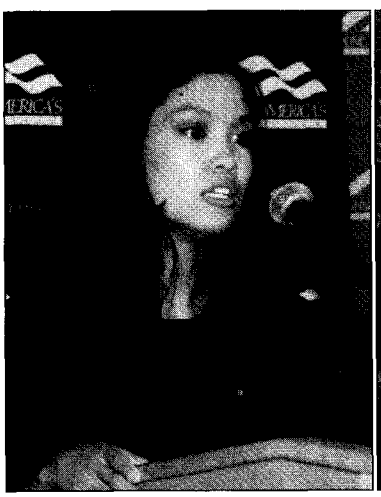
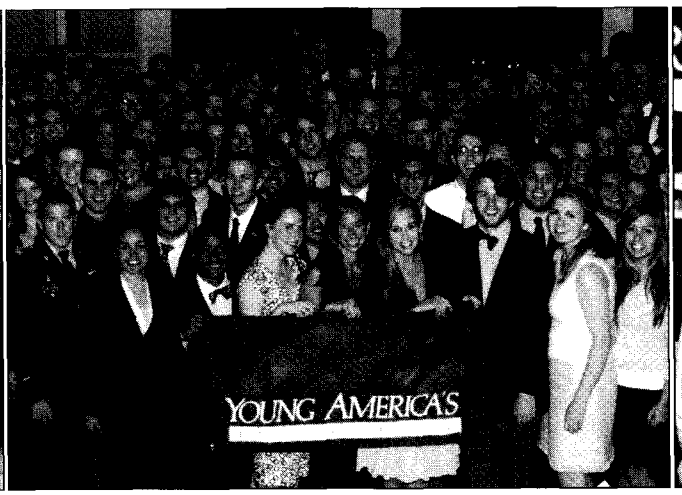


Michelle Malkin, best-selling author



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■ **FOREIGN AID**

Into Africa

The absurdity and sanctimony of Gordon Brown (and his type)

ANTHONY DANIELS

THE British chancellor of the exchequer, Mr. Gordon Brown, toured southern Africa recently. Newspapers described this tour as an attempt by the dour, charmless, and uncouth Mr. Brown to cut an international figure before he assumes the prime ministerial mantle of Mr. Blair at some time in the near future. His first act of statesmanship was to promise to give $15 billion of British taxpayers' money to fund primary education in the Dark Continent. Furthermore, he promised to persuade other countries to follow suit.

There was little outcry against his preposterous and immoral proposals, which were typical of his dirigiste instincts, which are now also those of a large proportion of the British electorate. Dirigisme is so deeply engraved in the British psyche that when, on the rare occasions a chancellor of the exchequer such as he lowers a tax, he is universally said in the newspapers and on the radio to have "given money away," which is a little like saying of a street robber that, if he leaves you the clothes you stand up in, he has given you clothes. On this view, the government's relation to the population is that of parent to child. Money is the government's, to decide what to do with; and the serious things of life, such as health, housing, education, pensions, and welfare, having been thus taken care of, it doles out pocket money for the children to spend on such little extras as they childishly desire.

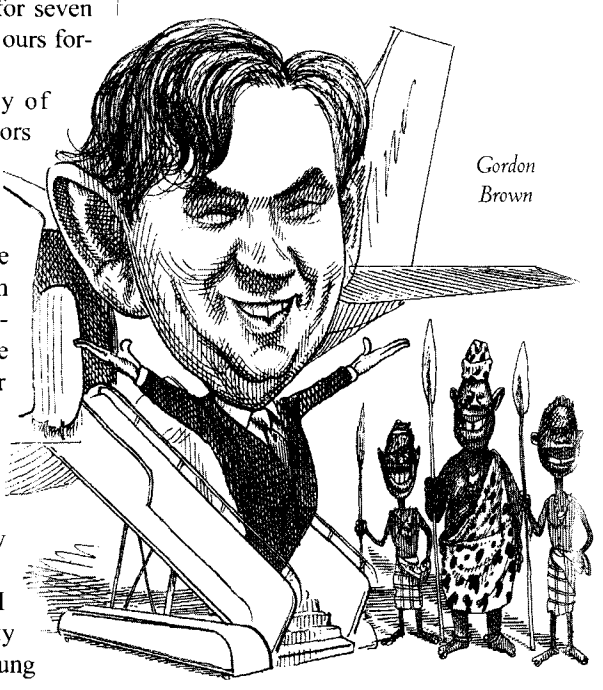
Mr. Brown so loves the poor—or at least dependents on the state—that he can't get enough of them. His fiscal policies promote family breakdown, the biggest single cause of poverty, or rather squalor, in Britain, which he then tries to ameliorate with ever more elaborate subventions and social programs, which not coincidentally cost a lot to administer, waste immense sums, and employ large numbers of people. Half the British population is now dependent on the state either in the form of salaries or social security and other "benefits." (The very word "benefits," employed without irony in Britain, begs the question and precludes thought, for who, other than a complete misanthrope, could be against conferring benefits on others, especially the poor or unfortunate?). As an astute politician, Mr. Brown is unlikely to have overlooked the electoral consequences of this demographic near-preponderance of dependents on the state.

Convinced of his own profound moral seriousness, which so conveniently accords with personal desire for power, Mr. Brown descended on Africa *de haut en bas*, in the combined role of guardian angel and fairy godmother. He arrived with two British schoolchildren in tow, how selected and paid for is unclear, publicly to indoctrinate them with his brand of sentimental Thirdworldism and to demonstrate to the folks back home his deep sympathy for childhood and children. (All dictators, socialists, and employees of the social-security system love children: Give us a child for seven years, they might say, and he is ours forever.)

It is doubtful whether any of Mr. Brown's African interlocutors pointed out to him, as he discoursed eloquently on the pitiful absence of primary education in much of Africa, that the educational situation is his own country, Britain, is far from brilliant. Despite the fact that the British state now spends four times as much in real terms on education per pupil as it did in 1950, at least a quarter of British children leave school after eleven years of compulsory attendance scarcely able to read, much less to write. Certainly, I have never found any difficulty in meeting British youths or young adults of at least average intelligence who could not multiply six by seven, and whose absence of arithmetical knowledge was not compensated for by knowledge of anything else. So much for state funding of primary education.

Quite apart from African notions of politeness, it isn't difficult to see why his interlocutors wouldn't have pointed any of this out to Mr. Brown, even if they'd known it. You don't look a gift horse in the mouth, least of all one bringing $15 billion, and promising another $50–100 billion. A photograph was published in the press of the usually unsmiling and humorless Mr. Brown laughing uproariously with Nelson Mandela and the president of Mozambique. It was easy to see that this laughter was to mirth what Formica is to wood. Anyone who remembers the Soviet Union would be reminded of Brezhnev hugging members of an official delegation of Uzbek or Kirghiz collective farmers. The bonhomie of apparatchiks is very distinctive and bodes ill for everyone else.

No one in Britain objected to the theory of government upon which Mr. Brown's "generosity" rests, which is that of unlimited government sovereignty to alienate private property. Relying on a popular vote of fewer than 36 percent of the eligible electorate, Mr. Brown deems it right and permissible for the government of which he is a member to expropriate the money of all his fellow citizens to satisfy an urge to preen himself on the world



Gordon Brown

ROMAN GENN

Mr. Daniels is the author of such books as *Utopias Elsewhere: Journeys in a Vanishing World* and *Monrovia Mon Amour: A Visit to Liberia*.

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Why Not Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol?

- Marijuana is far safer than alcohol because it does not stimulate aggressiveness and is not nearly as addictive.[1]
- To save $7.7 billion in enforcement costs.[2]
- To produce $6.2 billion in tax revenue (which could be used to pay for education, treatment and prevention for all drugs.)[2]
- To deprive cartels and gangs of a major source of revenue.[3]
- To significantly enhance the effectiveness of our police and courts. (Current annual marijuana arrests exceed 700,000 per year.)[4]
- To separate marijuana from far more dangerous illegal drugs, ending the "gateway" to drug dealers we now have.[5]
- To reduce hypocrisy and make drug education more credible and effective.[6]
- To end prisons doing far more damage to users than the drug itself.[7]
- To end the breaking of the law by otherwise law abiding citizens, especially the more than 900,000 children under 18 years old who buy and resell marijuana.[8]
- To remove major barriers to research for medical use.[9]
- To reduce violence in general and safeguard law enforcers.[10]

And because it would not have been banned at all but for a political scoundrel![11]

("...Anslinger's campaign may have been just a tool in the beginning, but fueled with this kind of racial tinder, it quickly got out of hand. The Treasury Department was barraged with cries for help from civic leaders:'I wish I could show you what a small marijuana cigarette can do to one of our degenerate Spanish-speaking residents...") *To be continued next month.*

Common Sense for Drug Policy

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stage by saving the pickaninnies, an objective of marginal concern to the population that he was elected to serve, not to rule.

It is not difficult, either, to see the condescension that lurks behind Mr. Brown's generosity with other people's money. Edward Said, who sniffed out the disguised colonial attitudes even in Jane Austen, thou shouldst be living at this hour! England hath need of thee! For Mr. Brown believes that Africans are such pathetic creatures that they can arrange nothing for themselves, not even a blackboard and chalk in a village, if they put their minds to it. The white man must come and do it all for them.

Mr. Brown's view of underdevelopment is that of an unreconstructed dirigiste and state monopolist. The experience of the last 40 years, above all in Africa, means nothing to him. He believes that an all-wise government should allocate resources to achieve certain ends, and that if only those resources were sufficient in quantity, development in the sense of the economic well-being of the population would follow by itself. If there were enough clinics and schools, all would be well, irrespective of whatever else the government might do. It does not occur to him that an infrastructure of social services, schools among them, that runs ahead of the economic capacity of a country to sustain it, is a barrier to development rather than a spur to it.

Primary education in Africa is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of economic development. It isn't even a good in itself, for it often raises expectations that for other reasons cannot be met. In Tanzania, where I worked for a few years, the population was impressively literate, but there was nothing for it to read apart from government propaganda, and it lived in the most abject and growing penury because of the government's socialist policies that no number of schools or clinics could ameliorate. And one of the most baleful legacies of colonialism in Africa as a whole—the very opposite of what it is usually condemned for—was to inculcate the population with the attitude that the purpose of education is the achievement of a position in a government office.

Still, the thirst of poverty-stricken Africans for primary education is a moving thing to behold. The point is, however, that they are perfectly able to arrange such education for themselves, as is demonstrated in the slums of Nairobi, where tiny, and very cheap, private schools have been set up by impoverished parents irritated by the deficiencies of the state system. They are not waiting for Mr. Brown to transfer yet more money from the poor in rich countries into the pockets of the rich in poor countries.

Gordon Brown's moral passion for Africa is but a disguised or contorted form of Keynesian economics, as well as a subtly regressive form of taxation.

Perhaps I am being unfair to Mr. Brown and his plan is much more patriotically Machiavellian than I give him credit for. You wouldn't have to know much about Africa to know that a substantial part of any aid granted to it sticks to the fingers of the African elites who administer it; and you wouldn't have to know much more to know that the African elites are not so naïve as to invest all, or even much, of their ill-gotten gains in Africa itself. They prefer the European property market to anything offered in Africa, where—thanks to their own bad habits—all investment is money down the drain. And so Mr. Brown might be intending, with his $15 billion, to strengthen the London banking and property sectors. After all, they have been among the chief beneficiaries of what the KGB has done in Russia: privatize things for themselves.

In other words, Mr. Brown's moral passion for Africa is but a disguised or contorted form of Keynesian economics, as well as a subtly regressive form of taxation, benefiting bankers and real-estate agents at the expense of the little Briton who pays his taxes. It also maintains property prices in London; which, of course, as a property owner, I can only applaud. **NR**

■ **CULTURE WATCH**

The Great American Crackup

Featuring Katrina, Iraq, and blister packs

FLORENCE KING

"I LOOK at the underside of things" was Guy de Maupassant's technique for finding out what is really going on with human nature. "What you see is what you get" is the American politician's campaign slogan. It's a clash of Titans—or at least one Titan.

Americans have held introspection at bay for most of our history, preferring what is self-evident (truths), pre-packaged (Manifest Destiny), catchy ("54/40 or Fight!"), and right smack in front of us (the West). Even 9/11 fit the established pattern. As long as our problems are unambiguous, like smoking ruins, we are not afraid to meet them. Trouble starts when an event or a person goes oblique on us. Ours is but to reason why, but we can't. We are terrified of introspective "what-iffing" because the only way we are capable of getting to the underside of things is marketing T-shirts stamped "Sh** Happens."

Introspection and its sundry variations of abstract thought, free-ranging speculation, and ruminative contemplation are lumped together in the American mind under the label "weird ideas," i.e., original ones, products of the despised (in)activity known as "sitting around thinking." If an American wants to sit around and think, the only acceptable venue is a focus group, where original thought is impossible. If he is not defanged by the choice of opinions he is given (a. often, b. some, c. never) he will be traumatized by the laboratory methods: a tiny blood-pressure cuff around

Florence King's NATIONAL REVIEW columns are collected in *STET, Damnit!: The Misanthrope's Corner, 1991 to 2002.*

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About Your Professor

Dr. Bart D. Ehrman (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has won several teaching awards, including the Students' Undergraduate Teaching Award and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Ehrman has written or edited 12 books.

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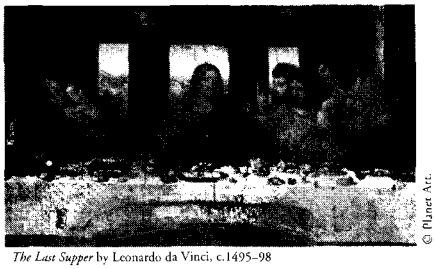

The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, c.1495–98

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his finger, the wire leading from the Anxiety Counter to his ankle, and the earphones whose volume he cannot control, all topped off by Frank Luntz's rubbery smile. This is thinking American-style, the only kind we will tolerate: high-tech, statistically calibrated, and above all, scientifically controlled.

The other night as I was sitting around thinking and jotting down stuff on the back of my electric bill, everything suddenly fell into place and I knew . . . *knew*. This was it, I thought. This time we've gone too far. We were having a national nervous breakdown; Americans were cracking up big-time and it had nothing to do with 9/11. It was all tied up with . . . I consulted my notes: *Poe . . . Miss Jean Brodie . . . compulsive repetition . . . projection mechanism . . . blister packs.*

Knowing their audience as they do, the media do not go in for fancy vocabulary. If they need a dramatic description they settle for "surreal," which is no longer dramatic now that they have made a cliché of it.

Hurricane Katrina brought the winds of change to their pedestrian offerings. Suddenly everybody sounded like a walking thesaurus as they described the desperate conditions at the Superdome and Convention Center. No matter which news show you tuned to, you heard words that nobody uses anymore; 19th-century words, yet they rang a faint bell. Faint because you had first come upon them in school, when you had to read *The Pit and the Pendulum* and that poem about "the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

As the camera panned over the thirst-maddened and starving, the dying and the dead, it sounded as if poor penniless Edgar Allan Poe had finally pulled himself together and gotten a good job with cable TV. The scene was "stygian . . . infernal . . . spectral." The refugees were trapped in an "abyss." Shots of cemeteries with broken tombs and floating coffins were "sepulchral," and one reporter even called the entire city of New Orleans a "charnel house."

I spent several days in front of the TV switching from one channel to another but I heard substantially the same thing on all three shows. I wondered if they were all cribbing from each other; maybe, I speculated, one researcher at one show had done her thesis on Poe and was finally using her master's, only to realize that everybody else was using it too.

But the vocabulary, archaic though it was, seemed somehow spontaneous, and the situation was too chaotic and fast-breaking to deal with researchers. I decided that since American Lit is a required subject, they had all taken it and thus were all acquainted with Poe.

But that still did not explain the unusual intensity they projected. It was as if they were latching on to something and repeating it over and over with a bubbly sort of frenzy, like a child who has concocted a verbal ritual, a magical incantation of "stygian-infernal-spectral" that he must finish reciting within a certain space of time to hold fear at bay. Katrina, after all, was the story that saw two reporters—Anderson Cooper and Shephard Smith—break down on camera, something that no reporter did on 9/11.

The terrorist attack had the clarity of Us vs. Them, but Katrina exposed what the late novelist Muriel Spark—creator of Miss Jean Brodie—called "a creeping vision of disorder." It showed us that, like Miss Brodie, we are not who we thought we were. No food, no water, no toilets, no lights, no police, and Yankee ingenuity couldn't do a thing about it. Americans saw themselves go from can-do to can't-do, and now—with confidence destroyed and nerves rubbed raw—they are waiting listlessly for the day that the country turns into one big FEMA.

The words *civil war* should stand alone. Stark, like the silent cannon in the Gettysburg dawn, like the town-square statue of the soldier staring off into the distance. Iron and bronze need no adjectives, stone needs no explanations.

They do now. As soon as reports of the Insurgent-Sunni-Shiite-Kurdish ominous gatherum became a daily fixture on the news, the media went into an equivocating frenzy of denial to prove that what was obviously happening was not really happening at all. No matter where you surfed—cable, network, PBS, C-SPAN—pundits and guests alike spoke with one voice and every tense but the present indicative.

Iraq "might be approaching" a civil war. It "could be spiraling into" a civil war. "If it were" a civil war. "It could turn into" a civil war. "It may be an undeclared" civil war. On and on it went: "on the brink of" a civil war, "on the verge of" a civil war, a civil war "is imminent . . . over the horizon . . . threatening." There was even a "quasi–civil war," and, influenced no doubt by endless cancer-awareness spots, someone described a "pre–civil war" and predicted that "it could metastasize" into the real thing.

After a couple of weeks of this I didn't trust myself to use even the most familiar quotations without looking them up. They might have changed:

GETTY HULTON ARCHIVE

Maggie Smith in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

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First Line in GWTW: "What does it matter if we were expelled from college, Scarlett? The unofficial civil war's going to start any day now."

Lincoln: "Now we are engaged in the build-up to a great civil war."

Barbara Fritchie: "Shoot if you must this old gray head but spare your country's flag, or else people will think we're having a civil war."

Cromwell: "Put your faith in the Lord and keep your powder dry in case a civil war breaks out."

Conspiracy theorists on both sides of the political spectrum are no doubt in ecstasy over this festival of temporizing. Oliver Stone could get two movies out of it: 1) The liberal media want to start a civil war in Iraq while our troops are there so they will be killed in it, 2) A great big fat civil war is already in progress but the conservative media are under orders from the White House to play down the fiasco.

It has nothing to do with conspiracy. It's psychological projection, a head game we play on ourselves when we attribute our own situation to somebody else. *We* are afraid of having a civil war, so we convince ourselves that Iraq is *not* having one.

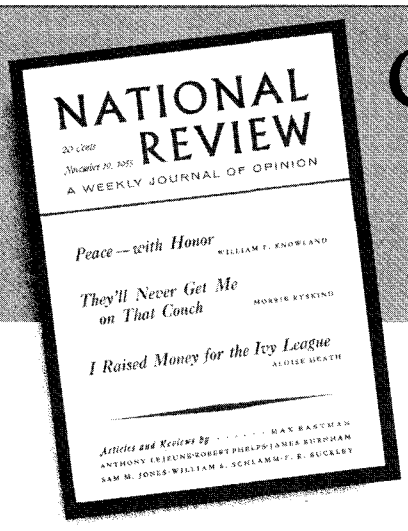
If you are still not convinced that America is losing her collective mind, buy something in a blister pack. I have come to dread them but more and more items are sold this way so I am forced to deal with them on a regular basis.

Try to open one, just try it. The other day I bought a hair dryer that was implanted on a foot-long slab of thick cardboard with an arching dome of reinforced plastic as strong as fiberglass. My paper scissors wouldn't even make a crease in the cardboard and were totally useless on the dome, which had no edges to get under. Nothing had a beginning or an end; the thing was simply itself. Next I tried my kitchen scissors but they did no more damage than the others; the pack was still pristine. I wasn't about to use my good kitchen knives; the butcher knife might have worked but it cost $75 and the hair dryer only $20, so it wasn't worth the risk. The boning knife was out of the question; the blade would have snapped like a toothpick.

Then I tried the meat cleaver. I managed to slice a section of the cardboard base in half but the cleaver jammed when I got to the dome. Did you get that? *The meat cleaver jammed.* It had turned into a seven-goddamnit job and I was only one-sixteenth finished.

Finally, I used the poultry shears, which are made to cut through bone. After nearly cutting through one of my own bones I got the dome to crack and at last the sucker began to give.

You know why we do this, don't you? Knowing that we are going nuts, we have turned to the blister pack as a subconscious way of keeping the lid on. **NR**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■ COVER STORY

A Congress Gone to Pot

If the GOP majority doesn't wake up, it will lose, and might even deserve to

KATE O'BEIRNE & RICHARD LOWRY

In response to a recent jump in gas prices, congressional Republicans reacted in characteristic fashion. They panicked, touted bad policy, and did themselves political harm, all in a spectacle seemingly designed to disgust the conservatives who had voted them into office. This has been a familiar pattern in recent years. The talk of Washington has been about the "shakeup" in the White House and what administration official—Dick Cheney? Don Rumsfeld? John Snow?—should be sacked to help turn around the national GOP's fortunes. We survey this scene and find ourselves asking, Is it Congress that should be fired?

President Bush deserves some of the blame for the rotten results from Congress—sometimes, he has affirmatively pushed bad policy (most recently with his "comprehensive" immigration reform), and he has made it his standard operating procedure not to try seriously to rein in congressional excess. There is no doubt that his coordination with Capitol Hill could be better, and the inability of his team to anticipate political problems—such as the Dubai ports-deal mess—has made life more difficult than it need be for his fellow Republicans. But the GOP in Congress acts as if establishing a smoother White House operation were the key to eliminating all its troubles. In reality, the locus of the national party's malaise is as much, perhaps more, on Capitol Hill than in the Bush administration.

Congressional Republican governance has gone through phases that can be roughly described as Revolution (1994–1996), Consolidation (1996–2002), and Deterioration (2002–present). The deterioration has steadily gotten worse. The Republican majority has lately been notable for its bungling, fecklessness, self-serving defensiveness, and hysteria—sometimes all at once. The congressional majority has repudiated Republican governance before voters even have the chance to do the same this November.

In terms of public esteem, Congress is floating somewhere between contemptible and beneath contempt. A recent poll finds only 22 percent approving of Congress's job performance, down 11 points over a single month. The drop comes with a sharp decline in approval by Republican respondents, according to GOP pollster Bill McInturff. Republicans hope to rally their base by raising the specter of Democratic control of Congress, but they are giving their supporters every reason to wonder: How much worse could that be?

Take gas prices. Speaker Denny Hastert and Majority Leader Bill Frist decided to play on the Democrats' familiar playing field by bashing the Big Bad Oil Companies. They called on the president to launch investigations into possible price gouging by the industry. Hastert called the compensation package for Exxon Mobil's retired CEO "unconscionable." His spokesman said, "Having a profit is good. We believe in that as Republicans. But when you're making this kind of money and American families are being affected, there should be appropriate things done to

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Israel and the United States

Is Israel an asset or a burden to our country?

The United States is without question Israel's most important ally. Also, without question, Israel is the staunchest and most reliable friend of the United States. But there are some who believe and vigorously advocate that Israel is a burden to the United States and that, were it not for Israel, peace would prevail in the Middle East.

What are the facts?

The "Israel lobby." A patriotic-named foundation urges, in full-page ads in national newspapers (very expensive – who pays for it?), to influence Congress to withhold support for Israel. Professors from prestigious universities write essays in which they aver that the United States is in thrall to the "Israel lobby." This lobby is said to pull the strings of American policy. Its supposed main promoters are AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the so-called "neo-cons," some of whom are indeed Jewish. They are said to exert an almost magical spell over policy makers, including the leaders of Congress and the President. Some even say that the Iraq war was promoted by this omnipotent "Israel lobby," that the President was flummoxed into declaring war on Saddam Hussein, not in order to defend the United States or to promote its interests, but in order to further the interests of Israel.

> "Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values will bind Israel and the United States forever."

Israel is indeed a major recipient of U.S. aid. Israel receives yearly $1.8 billion in military aid and $1.2 billion in economic aid, a substantial portion of our yearly aid budget. Almost all of the military aid is spent in the United States, making Israel one of the major customers of the U.S. defense industry. Virtually all of the economic assistance goes for repayment of debt to the United States, incurred from military purchases dating back many years.

America's staunchest ally. A good case can be made that aid to Israel, certainly the military portion, should be part of the United States defense budget, rather than of the aid budget because Israel is, next only perhaps to Britain, by far the most important ally of the United States. Virtually without exception, Israel's government and its people agree with and support the foreign policy objectives of the United States. In the United Nations, Israel's votes coincide with those of the United States over 90% of the time. The Arabs and other Moslem countries, virtually all of them recipients of American largess, almost reflexively vote against the United States in most instances.

Israel is the major strategic asset of the United States in an area of the world that is the cradle of Islamo-fascism, which is dominated by tyrants and permeated by religious obscurantism and shows almost total disregard for human rights. During the decades-long Cold War, Israel was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads of the Soviet Union. It is now the bulwark against the aggressive intentions of Iran. During Desert Storm, Israel provided invaluable intelligence, an umbrella of air cover for military cargo, and had personnel planted in the Iraqi deserts to pick up downed American pilots.

Gen. George Keagan, former head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, stated publicly that "Israel is worth five CIAs," with regard to intelligence passed to our country. He also stated that the yearly $1.8 billion that Israel received in military assistance was worth $50 to $60 billion in intelligence, R&D savings, and Soviet weapons systems captured and transferred to the Pentagon. In contrast to our commitments in Korea, Japan, Germany, and other parts, not a single American serviceperson needs to be stationed in Israel. Considering that the cost of one serviceperson per year – including backup and infrastructure – is estimated to be about $200,000, and assuming a minimum contingent of 25,000 troops, the cost savings to the United States on that score alone is on the order of $5 billion a year.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbor, its outstanding military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel. It is the only country that makes itself available to the United States in any contingency. Yes, Israel is not a burden, but a tremendous asset to the United States

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East and the indispensable defender of America's interests in that area of the world. The people of the United States, individually and through their Congressional representatives, overwhelmingly support Israel in its seemingly unending fight against Arab aggression and Moslem terror. But that support is not based on the great strategic value that Israel represents to the United States. It is and always has been based on shared values of liberty, democracy, and human rights. America and Israel are aligned by their shared love of peace and democracy. Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values, these common ideals, will bind Israel and the United States forever.

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bring prices down." How exactly the compensation of oil executives affects American families is left unexplained. (Speaking of effects on American families, federal spending has exceeded $20,000 per household for the first time since World War II.)

If Democrats consider more taxes the answer to any question, some Republicans aren't far behind. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) has backed Democrats' calls for a windfall-profit tax on oil companies, and Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Ethanol) asked the IRS to allow Finance Committee aides to review the corporate tax returns of oil and gas companies for the past five years. For what? we wonder. According to the Tax Foundation, in 2005, Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, and Chevron paid $44.3 billion in corporate taxes on their gross earnings. These payments were almost 50 percent higher than taxes paid the previous year. In addition to corporate taxes, these three companies paid or remitted $114.5 billion in other taxes in 2005, including payroll, property, and excise taxes. In any case, Republicans once understood that corporations don't pay taxes, their shareholders, employees, and customers do.

The political problem with all this is that once Republicans have given away the premises of their governing philosophy—in this case, that prices and executive compensation are determined by the market—they have no foothold to resist Democratic initiatives. Try as they might, there is no way that Republicans can be more socialistic and economically populist than the Democrats. They have set up a bidding war that the GOP must, by definition, lose. The same applies to the immigration debate: The Democrats will always be more pro-amnesty, and therefore more pro-Hispanic in the terms some Republicans have helped set for the debate, than the GOP.

On gas, congressional Republicans have lurched from the substantively and politically wrongheaded to the self-parodic. As part of a panic-induced, hastily assembled legislative proposal that is already falling apart, they are proposing a $100 rebate to compensate voters for high gas prices, which would simply be taking money from taxpayers to give it back to taxpayers in a symbolic sprinkling of cash. It is no accident that the proposal closely mirrors a Jimmy Carter–proposed rebate to try to boost the economy, a pathetic initiative from a pathetic administration. Republicans haven't yet gotten around to making President Bush's tax cuts permanent, but can consume themselves with such marginalia.

Republicans can't even get their photo-ops right. When Speaker Hastert held a press event at a local gas station to promote hydrogen cars, he rode in one of the gas-free cars for about a block before getting back in his armored SUV for the return to the Capitol. Photographers suspected some such stunt, and caught him in the act of switching cars.

At least a rebate or a botched photo-op doesn't do harm to the core functions of government. During the last few years, Congress has specialized in problem-causing responses to problems. In response to September 11, it created an enormous, sprawling Department of Homeland Security, endorsed by President Bush. Smart analysts said at the time that a collection of 22 disparate agencies could not be made to function effectively, at least not for years. Indeed, when DHS secretary Mike Chertoff is at a microphone, you never know whether the topic is avian flu, border control, port security, natural disasters, or terrorist threats. These areas are so important, each could easily be the secretary's fulltime responsibility.

When DHS's dysfunction played into the chaotic response to Hurricane Katrina, Congress turned around and excoriated the people in charge of the unmanageable department it itself had created. Being in Congress means never having to own up to your own errors, when you can browbeat other people over them during televised hearings instead. Blame always rolls off Capitol Hill onto someone else.

Once Republicans have given away the premises of their governing philosophy, they have no foothold to resist Democratic initiatives.

The same dynamic has played out in the creation of a new national intelligence director. As with the Department of Homeland Security, there was a mad rush to pass the reorganization of the intelligence bureaucracy, this one prompted by a recommendation of the 9/11 commission. Again, some experts warned at the time that creating a new layer of bureaucracy would only . . . create another layer of bureaucracy. In the event, this is exactly what has happened, but the leaders of the House Intelligence Committee now are outraged by it, and can't believe that national intelligence director John Negroponte is presiding over the very over-bureaucratization Congress insisted on.

No doubt, if the near-total ban Congress rushed to pass on coercive interrogation methods last year ever manifestly puts a crimp on efforts to preempt a terror attack, Congress will lead the chorus of outrage. Hearings will be held, and careers ruined—just not the careers of anyone who wrote the restrictions into law in the first place.

DAMN THE TORPEDOES, AND COMMON SENSE

What all three of these examples have in common is an unseemly stampede, a rush to take action that overwhelms any critical thought about the proposals in question. Congress couldn't even wait to get the Robb-Silberman report on how the intelligence community had missed the true state of Saddam's weapons program before rushing ahead to pass that intelligence reorganization. For the world's greatest deliberative body, Congress lacks any deliberative sense, lacks the ability or willingness to stop and think.

Congress always feels the need to "do something" in order to be "relevant," without caring too much what the something is. With its extensive oversight role, one would think that occasionally Congress would anticipate problems instead of always being in a reactive—or over-reactive—posture. But it missed the problems with the "wall" within the Justice Department that prevented

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effective counterterrorism coordination, the fecklessness of the CIA before 9/11 (and after), the rickety state of the electricity grid prior to the 2003 blackout, the fraud in corporate governance during the Internet bubble, the downside of absorbing FEMA into the Department of Homeland Security, and the gas shortages that would be caused by last year's new ethanol mandate. Congress is always about after-the-fact clucking and finger-pointing.

Another thing Congress is incapable of doing is making fiscal choices. Spending discipline is honored only in the breach, and with rhetorical flourishes thrown to the party's base at opportune moments. When ambitious Republican politicians get together for pre-2008 events like the recent straw poll in Memphis, the talk is all of Ronald Reagan and limited government. The kind of governance in Washington that they deliver is exactly the opposite.

Incontinence has become a way of life. When President Bush threatened a veto if the supplemental spending bill for the Iraq War and Katrina cleanup exceeded $92 billion, the Senate promptly voted to keep funding for the Mississippi senators' absurd $700 million railway line in a bill that remains $14 billion over the limit set by Bush. Even when it knows that wasteful spending has fundamentally harmed its standing with the public, and especially with its core supporters, the GOP Congress just can't help itself.

Overall federal spending is up 33 percent during the majority's Deterioration phase, with defense and post-9/11 spending on domestic security representing less than half of this new spending. Republicans are responsible for the largest expansions in federal education spending in history (up 72 percent since 1995), along with record spending increases in agriculture, highways, and entitlements. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Senate's "compromise" immigration bill will cost $27 billion in mandatory spending over the first ten years, including $12 billion in Medicaid and $12 billion in Earned Income Tax Credits.

It has become a Republican specialty to get favors from the public trough.

The number of annual earmarks has grown tenfold since the Republicans took over the House in 1995, from 1,439 to 14,000 last year. The House leadership backs cracking down on some earmarks, while the Senate maintains its addiction. Congress seems incapable of acting in the broader public good. It is a collection of parochialisms, jostling for their own spending projects and creature comforts.

WHAT KIND OF REFORMERS ARE THESE?

That explains the course of reform in Congress. Earlier this year, the House Republicans elected a new majority leader, John Boehner. He was a relatively fresh face for the party, even if he is no stranger to K Street. But his election quickly became a way to forestall change rather than foster it. Republicans collectively said, in effect, "We have embraced 'change' in the form of a new leader, now we don't have to adopt any of its substance."

Instead of passing a permanent ban on private travel, the GOP is proposing a moratorium on it until the election is over—in the hope that the public heat will abate and that "further study" will provide a rationale to keep this popular perk. New reporting requirements and tougher penalties are imposed on lobbyists (none of which will trip up Jack Abramoff–style operators), while political PACs can continue to wine and dine members and play golf with them.

The reform the GOP can get excited about is attempting to muzzle its opponents. A majority of House Republicans once opposed the McCain-Feingold bill's contribution limits on PACs because they restricted political speech. But irked at the lavish funding of liberal nonprofit groups known as 527s during the 2004 campaigns, House Republicans have now passed a bill extending the McCain-Feingold contribution limits to these independent groups—their prior principles be damned.

Republicans obviously want to duck their heads and hope they don't have to do anything painful to save themselves. The *Washington Post* reports that GOP lawmakers came back from Easter recess and "said they felt free to pass a relatively tepid ethics bill because constituents rarely mention the issue." Rep. David Hobson (R-Ohio) explained the alleged mistake of caring too much about the party's image on ethics. "We're all being rushed into a bill. We panicked, and we let the media get us panicked," he said. The only time Congress ever pulls back from a panic is to save its own perks.

Of course, panic is never a healthy reaction, but there is legitimate cause for GOP worry on the ethics front. A recent *Washington Post*/ABC poll found the Democratic party was trusted more than Republicans "to do a better job handling corruption in Washington" by 52 percent to 27 percent. Last month, a Pew Research Center survey found that by 44 percent to 28 percent, voters believed that Democrats "could do a better job in reforming government." Will the corruption issue alone sink the GOP? No. But it adds to the fabric of the public's discontent. With ongoing criminal investigations involving Abramoff and former congressman Duke Cunningham, Republicans are only one new indictment or guilty plea away from another cycle of the "culture of corruption" charges they now witlessly dismiss as innocuous.

Will the corruption issue alone sink the GOP? No. But it adds to the fabric of the public's discontent.

Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.) rebutted criticisms of the watered-down reform proposal by explaining, "If everybody is unhappy with a piece of legislation, it's probably a pretty good bill." By this standard, Congress itself is probably doing a pretty good job.

AN ACT NOT TOGETHER

The GOP caucus has both a leadership and a followership problem. If Newt Gingrich exemplified the Revolution phase of the GOP majority and Tom DeLay the Consolidation phase, Senate

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majority leader Bill Frist is the perfect representative of the Deterioration phase. Unlike Gingrich and DeLay, he is in the Senate, so has an inherently more difficult job managing his majority. But Frist captures the current GOP aimlessness. One day he's in favor of an enforcement-first approach to immigration; the next he's in favor of a "compromise" that's a far-reaching amnesty. He favored an increase in taxes on oil companies to fund the Senate's gas-rebate scheme, before he opposed it.

Not that Frist, or other Republican congressional leaders, are in charge of orderly and sensible flocks. The whiff of defeat, along with the loss of legislative master Tom DeLay, has sent moderates and conservatives in the House scurrying in opposite directions—the moderates to approve even more spending in an attempt to sway swing voters; the conservatives to crack down on spending to prevent a total rupture with the party's base.

In the Senate, Frist has to deal with a GOP caucus that features 54 other Republicans, almost all of whom consider themselves individual power centers. Senator Specter, for instance, is willing to torment the administration on an important national-security issue so Democrats won't have to. He is now threatening to block funding of the National Security Agency's warrantless surveillance program—a popular program that has given the administration one of its few issues that can cut against Democrats. Meanwhile, Sen. John Warner has said he might provide a forum for disgruntled generals to bash Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, following Hillary Clinton's request to hear from the handful of former flag officers opposed to Rumsfeld. In the midst of a war, other Republican senators have blocked nominations for important national-security posts because of parochial concerns or unrelated policy objections.

The national-security issue that looms largest, of course, is the Iraq War. Republicans facing voters this year recognize that their party is on the "wrong" side of an unpopular war and grouse about the president's apparent inability to assuage doubts about the chances for success in Iraq. Their prospects at the polls would improve dramatically if their constituents better understood how crucial a stable, democratic Iraq is to our national security and if George W. Bush's poll ratings were ten points higher. Rather than being struck dumb on the subject in the face of discouraging public opinion, GOP members should be using their seemingly constant recesses to make the case for the war in their districts.

Presented with their own manifest failures, and the understandable public reaction to them, congressional Republicans have lately been whistling the old Tip O'Neill tune "All Politics Is Local" past the electoral graveyard. Their hope is that paying attention to constituents' casework, touting feel-good federal programs, and attending ribbon-cutting ceremonies at their precious pork projects can save the day. Of course, Tip O'Neill's own party was done in by a disaffected electorate focused on national issues. GOP strategist Dave Winston points out, "For the past 30 years, and maybe longer, the outcome of congressional elections in non-presidential years has, with one lone exception [1990], been determined by a focus on national, not local, issues."

As the bad polling piles up, nervous Republicans will ask themselves, Can this Congress be saved? But the question frustrated Republican voters are increasingly asking is, Is it worth saving? **NR**

■ **THE ENVIRONMENT**

Acclimatizing

How to think sensibly, or ridiculously, about global warming

STEVEN F. HAYWARD

THE crusade to fight global warming with tough reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions has entered its war-room phase. Already we are seeing the fruits of a multi-million dollar PR campaign: lavish cover stories in *Time* magazine ("Be Worried, Be *Very* Worried"), *Vanity Fair*, and *Wired*; multiple global-warming scare specials on PBS, HBO, and the network news; and, finally, the imminent release of Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Soon the Ad Council will begin airing TV spots pulling on the usual heartstrings: We have to stop global warming *for the children!* One of these ads—featuring a montage of kids counting down "tick, tick, tick"—is reminiscent of the infamous 1964 anti-Goldwater ad.

Unfortunately, the green warriors substitute propaganda for persuasion, insist that there is no debate about the science of climate change, and demonize any scientist who dares dissent from their views. They advocate putting the U.S. and the world on an energy starvation diet, to the exclusion of a wider and more moderate range of precautions that might be taken against global warming.

Underlying this effort is a sense of panic over two things: the collapse of the Kyoto Protocol, and frequent polls showing that Americans aren't buying into global-warming alarmism. The latest Gallup poll on environmental issues found that only 36 percent of Americans say they "worry a great deal about global warming"—a number that has hardly budged in years. Global warming, Gallup's environmental-opinion analyst Riley Dunlap wrote, puts people to sleep. Even among those who tell pollsters that the environment is their main public-policy concern (who are usually less than 5 percent of all Americans), global warming ranks lower than air and water quality, toxic waste, and land conservation.

There is no conspiracy behind the global-warming-awareness campaign; in fact, the environment lobby is quite open about what it's up to. The Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies recently published a plan to elevate climate change to the top tier of the political agenda. This report, *Americans and Climate Change*, grew out of a summit meeting of environmental leaders held last year in—naturally—Aspen. It lists 39 recommendations for raising the percentage of the public that is alarmed by global warming from the anemic mid-30s to over 50 percent. Tactics include everything from manipulating

Mr. Hayward is a fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, and the author of the annual *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators*.

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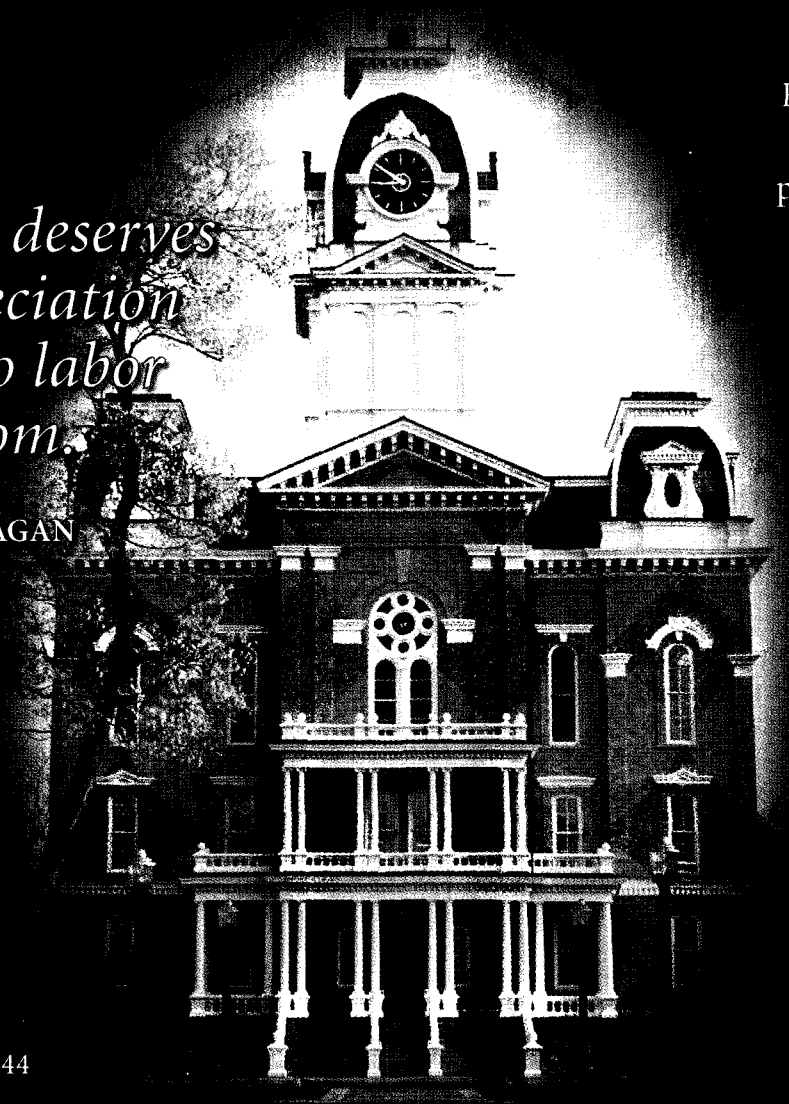

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— RONALD REAGAN

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- **ENDORSEMENTS**: Ranked among the nation's best colleges by *Barron's*, *U.S. News*, *Peterson's*, *ISI*, *The Princeton Review*
- **DEGREES**: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, 32 majors
- **RECENT DISTINGUISHED VISITING FACULTY**: The Honorable Clarence Thomas, Sir Martin Gilbert, Mark Helprin, Victor Davis Hanson, David McCullough

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public-school curricula to reaching out to NASCAR's fan base to seizing events like Hurricane Katrina as "teachable moments."

The Yale report also does us the favor of making its authors' desire to politicize climate change explicit. One faction of environmentalists openly argues that "the only way to proceed is to exercise raw political power, wake up the public about the urgent nature of the issue, create a major public demand for action comparable to that which stimulated major environmental legislation in the 1970s, pursue outright victory at the polls." In other words, we need to boot out those evil Republicans.

GAME OVER, THEY SAY

This campaign intimidates the public and would-be dissenters with its unrelenting line that the science of global warming is settled, full stop. (*Time* swallowed it whole: "The debate is over. Global warming is upon us—with a vengeance. From floods to fires, droughts to storms, the climate is crashing.") The "consensus" that human activities are playing a role in the earth's so-far mild warming trend is misrepresented as agreement that we are headed toward catastrophic results that can be prevented only by immediate and drastic action.

In fact, many scientists don't believe the catastrophe scenarios. But those who dissent from the politicization of climate science face withering *ad hominem* attacks. For example, the National Environmental Trust and *Vanity Fair* attacked Frederick Seitz, the 94-year-old former president of the National Academy of Sciences, for supposedly taking money from R. J. Reynolds while he was president of Rockefeller University to deny the health effects of smoking. In fact, the money went into a medical-research project unrelated to tobacco that led to a Nobel Prize in medicine. The climate-action caucus clearly feels no shame about employing smear tactics. One might even go so far as to accuse it of scientific McCarthyism.

But try as it might, this caucus cannot change two facts that have been evident since climate change first came to the fore in the late 1980s. First, even though the leading scientific journals are thoroughly imbued with environmental correctness and reject out of hand many articles that don't conform to the party line, a study that confounds the conventional wisdom is published almost every week. Sometimes these studies even find their way into *Science* and *Nature*. Most recently, the April 20 issue of *Nature* carried a study that casts serious doubt on the high-temperature forecasts of computer climate models. And last fall, *Science* published a study finding that the Greenland ice sheet, whose perimeter melting is presented as a sign of imminent sea-level rise (never mind that the Vikings observed similar melting 1,000 years ago), is *gaining* ice mass in the interior. (The oddest aspect of the Greenland story is that average temperatures in southern Greenland appear to have fallen during the 20th century; ice-mass changes probably have more to do with regular variation in Atlantic ocean currents—a natural phenomenon known as Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation.) The media tend to ignore such research while giving disproportionate coverage to the latest news about melting glaciers or expiring frogs.

Climate alarm is likely to get a fresh infusion of "authoritative" science next year when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issues its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4). Early indications are that AR4 will remove its upper-bound estimate of potential warming at the end of this century (currently 5.8 degrees Celsius), assuring a fresh round of media headlines that the situation is worse than we thought. Yet the computer climate models remain plagued with weaknesses and biases—from the doubtful emissions forecasts that go into the front end, to assumptions about the linearity of the relationship between greenhouse gases and temperature that affect the results. As MIT climatologist Richard Lindzen argues, the computer models overestimate the sensitivity of climate to greenhouse gases and don't adequately account for "negative forcings" (the technical term for natural processes that mitigate potential temperature increases). It is likely, in Lindzen's judgment, that we have already reached the threshold of diminishing "positive forcings" (that is, increases in temperature) from additional greenhouse-gas emissions.

Most of the computer models predict temperature increases of two to three degrees Celsius by the year 2100, which, while not an "end of civilization as we know it" catastrophe, could cause significant problems for the planet. Even discounting for the biases in the models, these predictions still raise questions about what precautions are appropriate to take against a low-probability event with potentially serious consequences. This leads to the second difficulty for the climate-change crusade: There are alternatives to its insistence that the only appropriate policy response is steep and immediate emissions reductions (on the order of 60 percent). Kyoto's 8 percent reduction target is modest by comparison, but no nation is honestly meeting it. (Britain met its 2000 target as an unintended consequence of Margaret Thatcher's decision 20 years ago to smash the coal miners' union and move the nation to natural gas. But even with this wind in its sails, Britain is seeing its greenhouse-gas emissions start to rise again.) The energy technologies to achieve a 60 percent reduction in emissions while meeting the world's energy needs simply do not exist.

Environmentalists were against fossil fuels long before climate change rose to prominence, and this monomania is evident in their continued opposition to nuclear power, the only technology that can generate large amounts of energy without emitting greenhouse gases. (In a recent C-SPAN appearance with me, the legislative director of the League of Conservation Voters said that nuclear power had *no role* to play in mitigating climate change.) Instead, environmentalists advocate a supposedly market-friendly "cap and trade" program. Such a program would impose downwardly ratcheting emissions caps; but instead of creating thousands of detailed Clean Air Act–style regulations, it would grant "emissions permits" to companies, which would be able to trade these permits among each other. If one company's emissions were lower than the allowed amount, it could trade or sell its "leftover" allotment to a second company, which could add that amount to its own emissions allotment. The idea of such trading is to let the market guide emissions reductions to the companies able to undertake them most efficiently.

"Cap and trade" is thought to have been a great success in reducing sulfur-dioxide emissions at low cost. But there is a world of difference between sulfur dioxide and greenhouse gases. For a variety of reasons, curbs on sulfur dioxide did not impose any constraint on net energy production, whereas a

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greenhouse-gas-emissions cap ultimately would constrain energy production.

A COMMONSENSE AND WORKABLE PLAN

A sensible climate policy would emphasize building resilience into our capacity to adapt to climate changes—whether cooling or warming; whether wholly natural, wholly man-made, or somewhere in between. A resilience policy, instead of focusing solely on emissions controls, would have four parts.

First, the transition to a post-carbon world decades from now will come about more quickly and efficiently by keeping energy markets open and unregulated than by subsidizing particular energy technologies or artificially making energy more expensive for producers and consumers. Efforts to subsidize energy paths will inevitably fall prey to interest-group lobbying (as witness the domestic ethanol lobby's success in winning tariffs on foreign ethanol), and will likely delay the development of promising technologies.

Second, we should implement practical carbon-sequestration measures: the capturing and storing of carbon in any number of places, whether underground, deep in the ocean, or in biomass (think more trees). There is much sequestration research under way, but many environmentalists oppose it because it would let us off the hook for our original sin of energy consumption.

Third, we should consider strategies of adaptation to a changing climate. A rise in the sea level need not be the end of the world, as the Dutch have taught us. Developing countries with vulnerable coastlines will be better able to adapt if their economic growth is not constrained by severe energy limits. And here at home, the federal government ought to stop subsidizing flood insurance and coastal development anyway; potential climate change is another reason to eschew such policies.

Finally, we should consider climate modification. If humanity is powerful enough to disrupt the climate negatively, we might also be able to change it for the better. On a theoretical level, doing so is relatively simple: We need to reduce the earth's absorption of solar radiation. A few scientists have suggested we could accomplish this by using orbiting mirrors to rebalance the amounts of solar radiation different parts of the earth receive. Right now this idea sounds as fanciful as Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative seemed in 1983, but look what that led to. New York University physicist Martin Hoffert points out that the interval between the Wright brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk and Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon was a mere 66 years. It is entirely reasonable to expect vast changes in our technical capacity before the century is out.

In the end, a relentless campaign to extend political control over the world's energy use is likely to fail, in part because, even if severe climate change is in our future, most people intuitively recognize that rhetoric about "the end of civilization as we know it" is inconsistent with human experience. Our distant ancestors survived an ice age with little more than animal skins, crude tools, and open fire pits. For all the talk of science and progress, the global-warming alarmists betray an astonishing lack of confidence in human creativity and resiliency. It's almost as if the scientific community had abandoned the idea of evolution. **NR**

■ **THE SOVIET UNION**

The Annals of Jonathan Brent

One man and a great publishing project

JOHN J. MILLER

For those who are wearily familiar with the Left's control of higher education, it will come as no surprise to learn that Bard College in New York is home to the Visiting Alger Hiss Professor of History and Literature—an endowed chair named after one of the most notorious traitors in American history. "Every year we get some crank letters from fringe groups about it," complains Leon Botstein, Bard's president and one of the few remaining agnostics on the question of whether Hiss, while serving in FDR's State Department, spied for the Soviet Union. "It really isn't a political appointment."

That claim would be laugh-out-loud funny—except that it appears to be true. Amazingly, the current occupant of the Hiss professorship may be as responsible as anyone in the United States for exposing the crimes of Communism. Jonathan Brent is not only the holder of the Hiss chair at Bard, where he teaches a weekly class, but also editorial director of the Yale University Press, where he oversees the publication of a series of books that meticulously chronicle the evils of Soviet totalitarianism. "What Jonathan Brent and the Yale press have done for Soviet history is unprecedented: Their work has put previously unknown and inaccessible documents in libraries where students and historians will be able to use them forever," raves Anne Applebaum, who won the Pulitzer Prize in 2004 for *Gulag*. It is perhaps not too much to say that Brent's *Annals of Communism* series, which was launched more than a decade ago, is one of the most important publishing projects in the world.

FORMATIONS

The 56-year-old Brent occupies a first-floor corner office at Yale University Press, in a building near the New Haven Green. With his salt-and-pepper hair, he looks vaguely like Paul Wolfowitz. Newspaper clippings and reviews of books he has edited cover his walls, along with a calendar that, in the great tradition of the absent-minded professor, hangs open to last August. Manuscripts clutter his desk and books are piled everywhere.

The books are no surprise—not only is Brent the editorial director of a non-profit publishing enterprise, but literature has been a part of his life from the very start. His father was the owner of Stuart Brent Books, a Chicago shop frequented by the likes of Saul Bellow and Allan Bloom. When he was in the eighth grade, Brent made it his ambition to read a really long book, and so he searched his grandmother's house for the one with the thickest spine. He

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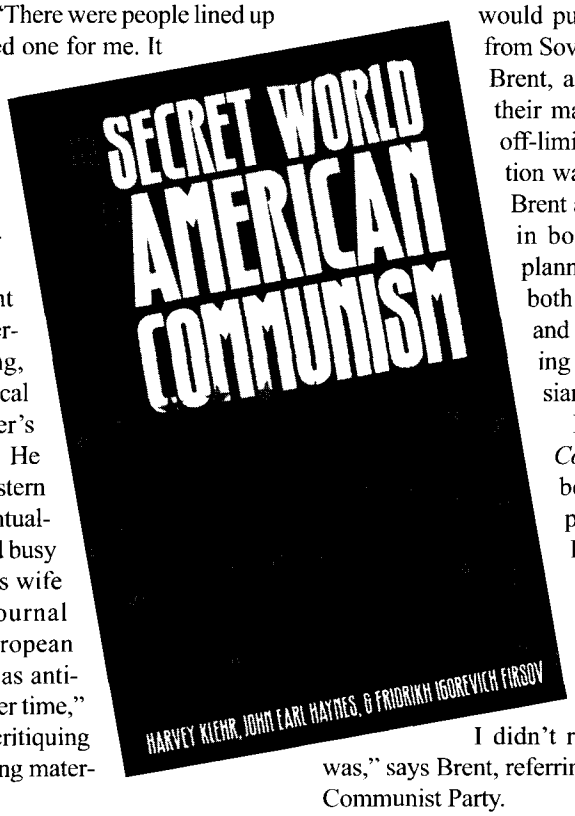
found *Anna Karenina*. "It took about a year to read," he says. "I fell in love with that book." Then he moved on to an even thicker Tolstoy volume: *War and Peace*. When Brent's grandfather, who was born in Lvov, spotted him reading it, he showed the boy how to spell "Tolstoy" with Cyrillic letters. "From that moment," says Brent, "I knew I wanted to study Russian literature."

That's what he did as an undergraduate at Columbia, becoming fluent in a language for which he figured he would have no professional use. He eventually went to the University of Chicago for his Ph.D. in English and did some translating on the side, including a few of the first translations of the Russian-born poet Joseph Brodsky (who won the 1987 Nobel Prize in Literature). Around this time, Brent got his first taste of Solzhenitsyn by reading *The Gulag Archipelago*. "My father managed to get 100 copies of the original book in Russian," says Brent. "There were people lined up outside the store to buy it, but he saved one for me. It really opened my eyes to what was going on in the Soviet Union." Even so, Brent was hardly a Cold Warrior—he had protested the Vietnam War at Columbia, and his attraction to Solzhenitsyn had more to do with literature than politics.



These were hectic years, as Brent tried to balance the demands of fatherhood with graduate school, teaching, translating, reviewing books for the local papers, working part time in his father's store, and searching for a regular job. He finally found employment at Northwestern University Press (where he would eventually rise to director), but he always stayed busy with side projects. In 1984, he and his wife started *Formations*, a quarterly journal that took an interest in Eastern European writers. "*Formations* didn't start out as anti-Communist, but it became that way over time," he says. "A lot of our writers were critiquing Communism." He also began publishing material on dissidents.

Before long, several bookstores refused to carry *Formations*. "They just wouldn't stock it," says Brent. "It taught me about a sickness in a certain kind of left-wing politics—the notion that someone could accuse me of retrograde views simply because I was trying to defend the civil liberties of artists who were being oppressed by the state." He may have made some enemies, but he also made friends on both sides of the Iron Curtain. One of his patrons was George Soros, the Hungarian-born financial speculator.

OPENING THE VAULT

In the spring of 1991, Brent attended a conference in Prague, where he heard a Hungarian historian talk about his research into the newly opened archives of his government. "Having access to these documents sounded like a great publishing opportunity," says Brent. Yet he was not sure how to take advantage of it. He thought about moving to Europe, but instead took a job at Yale's imprint, where his assignment was to edit books on the humanities. As he was making this personal transition, the Soviet Union collapsed—Gorbachev was out and Yeltsin was in. Brent began thinking about the possibility of a multi-volume project that drew from Soviet archives. He asked his boss, the now-retired John Ryden, to let him fly to Moscow. Recalling Brent's enthusiasm, Ryden says, "No one else on the staff had his interest in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. I told him to go and see what he could find."

It was the first of Brent's many excursions for Yale. In January of 1992, he began negotiating with Soviet archivists who embraced the spirit of openness that was then sweeping Russia—and who also craved the packs of Marlboros that Brent made a habit of dropping on their desks. Over the course of many months, Brent hammered out a contract whereby Yale University Press would publish scholarship that used documents from Soviet archives. Not everything was open to Brent, as some archives placed restrictions on their material and others remained completely off-limits. Yet an enormous amount of information was made available for the first time, and Brent agreed to print this information in books in both the United States and Russia. He planned to reproduce the Soviet documents both in Russian and in English translation, and then to publish them in volumes containing commentary from American and Russian scholars.

It was a promising start for the *Annals of Communism*, but there is a big difference between signing a contract and actually producing finished books. For one thing, Brent needed to begin locating the scholars who would comb the archives, study thousands of documents, make judgments about their importance, and then write the manuscripts. The project was daunting on many levels. "At the time, I didn't really even know what the Comintern was," says Brent, referring to the international wing of the Soviet Communist Party.

As Brent was striking his deal, the *New York Times* published a short item on his arrangement. This caught the eye of Harvey Klehr, a political scientist at Emory University. He had been poking around in the Soviet archives on his own and was thinking about co-authoring a narrative history of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) with John Earl Haynes, a researcher at the Library of Congress. So Klehr called Brent and told him about what he was finding. "The information was incredible," says Klehr. "An employee at the archive later told me that everyone had assumed I was a Communist, because who else would be interested in the CPUSA?"

For serious students of American politics, the CPUSA was a highly charged topic. Conservatives maintained that the organization was a pawn of the Kremlin. The left-wingers who dominated the academy insisted that it was simply a political party of patriots who had some doubts about capitalism. Klehr and Haynes, along with their Russian partner Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, suddenly found themselves able to set aside the claims and counterclaims of

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grizzled antagonists and look at actual evidence from the Soviet archives.

Their book, *The Secret World of American Communism*, came out in 1995—and it generated headlines around the world. The book's 92 documents contained smoking-gun evidence that the CPUSA was deeply involved in espionage against the United States. Furthermore, it buttressed the controversial claim by Whittaker Chambers, the man who originally accused Hiss of spying, that Washington, D.C., was home to an elaborate network of clandestine agents in the 1930s. Other revelations included proof that billionaire Armand Hammer laundered money for the Soviets and that Edmund Stevens, a prominent Moscow-based reporter, was on the Soviet payroll. Vitally, *The Secret World of American Communism* reproduced documents rather than merely summarizing them. "It was hard for anybody to argue with what we were able to display on the printed page," says Haynes. Reviews in the popular press were overwhelmingly positive. The academic response was predictably more grudging, but even writers such as left-wing historian James R. Barrett, who reviewed the book for the *Journal of American History*, had to admit that "recent studies have perhaps neglected this darker side of the international context and underestimated Soviet influence."

Jonathan Brent operates with a sense of urgency, never sure when his permission to use Soviet documents might be tightened or shut off.

MAKING HISTORY

More books in the *Annals of Communism* series followed. There are currently 18 in print, with at least eight others in various stages of preparation. Each has broadened our understanding of Soviet history. *The Unknown Lenin*, by Richard Pipes, showed that, contrary to claims that Stalin had corrupted a purer form of Communism, Lenin could be just as violent and cruel as his successor. Several other books provided new insights into Stalin's own depravity, unearthing letters that ordered murders as well as new information on the 1939 secret pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany. One of the most controversial volumes in the series was *Spain Betrayed*, by Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov, which demolished left-wing mythmaking about the Spanish Civil War by revealing the extent to which the Soviet Union controlled Republican forces. "If Spain were Vietnam these would be its Pentagon Papers," wrote Sam Tanenhaus in *Vanity Fair*.

These books were expensive propositions. None has sold as many as 20,000 copies, and many have sold considerably fewer. Because of this, the series has required philanthropic support. "You can't just send one birddog into the archives," says Brent. "For each book, you have to send in teams of researchers." For one title, *The History of the Gulag*, Brent says he hired a dozen Russians to scour for documents for two years. Although Yale University Press has its own endowment, Brent had to search for outside sources of funding, mainly from conservative foundations. "I tried to go to some of the really big foundations, like Ford and MacArthur, but they turned us down," says Brent. "After a while I just gave up asking." In 1996, an acquaintance encouraged Brent to make a cold call to NATIONAL REVIEW's William F. Buckley Jr., who reported on Brent's efforts in his newspaper column and encouraged readers to send checks. A car dealer from Dallas mailed in $50,000. A lady in Maryland began her practice of donating $5 per year. Brent credits Buckley's public notice, in addition to several private appeals, with generating gifts worth about a half-million dollars.

Brent's work at Yale University Press has involved far more than the *Annals*. Serving as editorial director since 1997, he currently oversees the publication of about 180 books per year. (He also co-authored his own book, *Stalin's Last Crime*, for HarperCollins.) Although Brent isn't sure how to describe his own politics—he says he's a registered independent and has never voted for a Republican in a presidential election—he has made Yale one of the few academic presses in the country that welcome conservatives as authors. This spring, Yale printed works by John Lukacs, Harvey Mansfield, and Thomas Sowell. "I don't care about a writer's politics," says Brent, who has also published liberals such as Reed Hundt and Gore Vidal. "I'm constantly on the lookout for excellent pieces of well-written scholarship that tell the truth." Everything is peer-reviewed, as is the convention for a university press.

In the coming months, Brent expects to publish several more volumes in the *Annals* series, including a definitive treatment of the Katyn massacres, an analysis of how the Soviets tried to manipulate Russian writers, and a collection of caricatures. There will be plenty of other books as well, especially if Brent can finish negotiating a contract that will give his press complete access to the Stalin archives, whose contents have barely been tapped. He operates with a sense of urgency, never sure when his permission to use Soviet documents might be tightened or shut off. "*The Secret World of American Communism* could not be written today," says Klehr, because some of its information has been reclassified as secret. For now, however, the Soviet archives remain a treasure trove of information—and Brent can only imagine what might be learned if he and his scholars could search through them all, including the ones that have never been opened. "We'd be able to see the full range of Soviet penetration of our government," he says. "We're 99 percent certain that Hiss was a spy—I personally believe he was, based on the evidence I've seen, but some of it is still circumstantial. I think we could learn more from documents that are currently unknown."

If Brent were to become responsible for discovering them, then perhaps he could prevail upon Bard College to change the name of his chair: Rather than the Visiting Alger Hiss Professor, he could be the Permanent Whittaker Chambers Professor. **NR**

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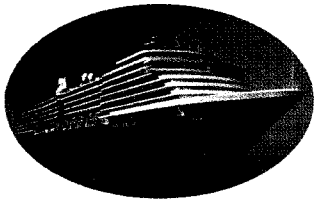

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- Arizona Republican **John Shadegg** and former Congressmen **Pat Toomey** (now President of the Club for Growth) are two true-blue conservatives who've never backed away from principle—their authoritative and honest take on the state of the GOP on Capitol Hill following the November 7th elections is something no one will want to miss.
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MON/Nov. 13	Cabo San Lucas (Mexico)	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	late-night smoker
TUES/Nov. 14	Mazatlan	8:00 AM	6:00 PM	
WED/Nov. 15	Puerto Vallarta	8:00 AM	11:00 PM	evening cocktail reception
THURS/Nov. 16	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars late-night smoker
FRI/Nov. 17	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
SAT/Nov. 18	San Diego, CA	7:00AM		

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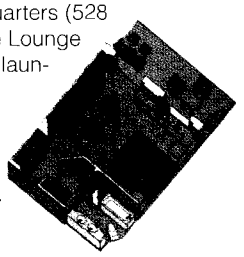

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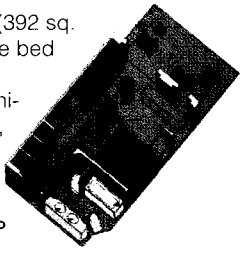

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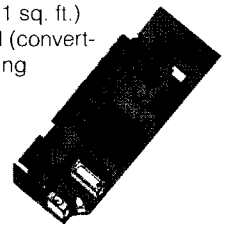

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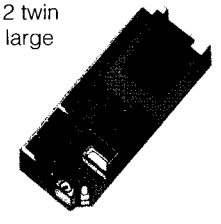
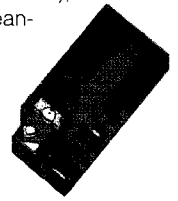
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 4,499

LARGE OCEAN VIEW Comfortable quarters (190 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv, large ocean-view windows.



Category D
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 2,399 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 3,299

LARGE INSIDE Cozy but ample cabin quarters (185 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv, large ocean-view windows.



Category K
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 1,799 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: $ 2,499

cruise, which takes place on one of the best ships afloat. The *Oosterdam* (still shining and gleaming from her recent inaugural) is beautiful, with sumptuous accommodations, antique-filled public spaces, an indulgent and courteous staff, superior cuisine, and top-notch entertainment and excursions. It's the perfect vessel to take us to:

CABO SAN LUCAS Where the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortes meet at Land's End, "Cabo" sits on the tip of the Baja Peninsula. Sun and sand are big here, but the fish are even bigger. Marlin, sailfish, tuna, and billfish all abound in these rich waters.

MAZATLAN is the home of Mexico's largest shrimp fleet and numerous beachside restaurants specializing in this tasty creature. Explore the colonial villages of the Sierra Madres and hold your breath as you watch the Papantla Flyers work their acrobatic magic.

PUERTO VALLARTA The quintessential resort, "PV" is the darling of the Riviera. Stroll cobblestone streets lined with chic boutiques and galleries. Explore the bustling City Market, or while away the afternoon on a white-sand beach.

The ***National Review* 2006 Post-Election Mexican Cruise** will be remarkable—but then every *NR* sojourn is remarkable. Our winning program of seminars (we'll have six), cocktail parties (three are scheduled—they're *great* opportunities to chat and have photos taken with your favorite conservatives), late-night poolside smokers (two are in store, featuring **H. Upmann** cigars and cognac), and dining with our editors and speakers (on at least two nights)—it's all something you really *must* experience.

Sign up now. Use the application on the following page (it provides pricing on Holland America's affordable "Fly Cruise" airfare program) to reserve your stateroom, or order immediately on our special website—**www.nrcruise.com**.

Take the trip of a lifetime with some of America's preeminent intellectuals, policy analysts, and political experts—**Milton Friedman, William F. Buckley Jr., Arthur Laffer, Victor Davis Hanson, Bernard Lewis, Kenneth Starr, Dinesh D'Souza, John Shadegg, Pat Toomey,** and *NR* Editors **Rich Lowry, Kate O'Beirne, Ramesh Ponnuru, Jay Nordlinger,** and **John O'Sullivan,** on the ***National Review* 2006 Post-Election Mexican Cruise.**

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CALL THE CRUISE AUTHORITY AT
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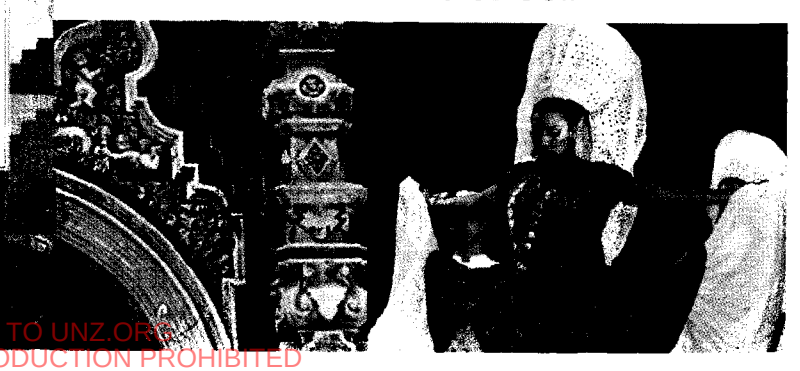

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The National Review 2006 Post-Election Cruise Application

Mail to: National Review Cruise, The Cruise Authority, 1307 Powers Ferry Rd., Marietta, GA 30067-5409 or Fax to 770-916-1425

Please fill out application completely and mail with deposit check or fax with credit-card information. One application per cabin. If you want more than one cabin, make copies of this application. For questions call The Cruise Authority at 800-707-1634.

Personal

Name #1 (full legal name) + Nickname — Date of Birth — Size: S-XXL

Name #2 (full legal name) + Nickname — Date of Birth — Size: S-XXL

Names #3 & #4 (if taking others in your cabin) — Date of Birth — Size: S-XXL

Street Mailing Address

City ( ) State ZIP

Daytime Phone Email Address

Special Information (medical conditions, celebrating anniversary, etc.)

Payment

A deposit of $400 **per person** is due with this application. If paid by credit card, the balance will be charged to the *same* card on 8/11/06 unless otherwise directed. If application is received after 8/11/06, the full amount of the cruise will be charged. Cabins and categories are available on a first come, first served basis. *Suites are limited!*

☐ My deposit of $400 **per person** is included.
(Make checks payable to "National Review Cruise")

☐ Charge to: AmEx ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Expiration Date (Month) ☐☐ (Year) ☐☐

Authorized Signature of Cardholder/Guest

Information and price quote on Cancellation Fee Waiver/Medical Insurance will accompany your statement. Cancellation Penalty Schedule follows (cancellations must be received in writing by the date indicated):

PRIOR *to June 12, 2006*	*$75 per person*
June 12, 2006 to August 11, 2006	*$400 per person*
AFTER *August 11, 2006*	*100% of cruise/package*

Cruise

(All rates are per person, double occupancy, and include all port charges and taxes, all gratuities, meals, entertainment, and *National Review* activities. Cruise-only rates include all of above except airfare and transfers. Failure to appear for embarkation for any reason constitutes a cancellation subject to full penalties. Personal items not included.)

PLEASE CHECK ALL APPLICABLE BOXES!

I. CABIN CATEGORY *(see list and prices on previous page)*

First cabin category choice:_____ Second cabin category choice:_____

Bedding: Beds made up as ☐ Twin ☐ King/Queen

BOOKING SINGLE? ☐ Please try to match me with a roommate. (My age: ____)

II. AIR/TRANSFER PACKAGES

☐ We will provide our own roundtrip air and transfers to and from San Diego.
☐ Include air with our package from _____ (see list below).
☐ We need to purchase transfers from the airport to the ship at $32 per person.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

CITIZENSHIP: Is everyone a U.S. citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If No, indicate citizenship: _____

DINING w/ FRIENDS/FAMILY: I wish to dine with _____
☐ Every Night ☐ 3-4 times ☐ Once

IV. PRE- AND POST-CRUISE TOUR PACKAGES

☐ Please send me information on pre-/post-cruise packages in San Diego.

Important!

Everyone cruising will be required to bring either a valid passport OR a certified birth certificate (with raised seal!), plus photo ID. Failure to do so may result in being denied boarding of the *Oosterdam*. Children do not require photo ID.

Responsibility: Notice is hereby given that the cruise advertised herein, including all tickets, vouchers and coupons issued and all arrangements for transportation or conveyance or for hotel or lodging or for sightseeing services are made by H20 Ltd. d/b/a The Cruise Authority (TCA) on behalf of *National Review*, as agency for Holland America Line (HAL), and/or service providers and/or suppliers providing services necessary for operation of the tour upon the express condition that TCA shall not be liable for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity to any tour participant or his or her property that may result from any act or omission of any company, contractor or employee thereof providing services in connection with the tour, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, sightseeing, luggage handling and tour guiding. Furthermore, TCA cannot be held responsible for delays or costs incurred resulting from weather and road connections, breakdowns, strikes, riots, acts of God, acts of terrorism, authority of law or other circumstances beyond its control. In the event that a participant be entitled to a refund of monies paid, TCA will not be liable in excess of amount paid. TCA reserves the right to decline any persons as a tour participant at any time. TCA is not responsible for price increases imposed by HAL and/or service providers. Such increases may be implemented prior to deposit received. TCA is not responsible for breach of contract or any intentional or careless actions or omissions on the part of HAL and/or service providers, such as suppliers of tours or other services used or obtained on or at the time of the cruise or shore excursions, which result in any loss, damage, delay or injury to you or your travel companions or group members. TCA does not guarantee any of such suppliers rates, booking or reservations and TCA shall not be responsible for any social or labor unrest, mechanical or construction difficulties, acts of terrorism, diseases, local laws, climate conditions, abnormal conditions, or developments or any other actions, omissions or conditions outside of TCA's control. TCA, nor *National Review* shall be responsible for the accessibility, appearance, actions or decisions of those individuals promoted for this cruise. By embarking upon his or her travel, the traveler voluntarily assumes all risks, and is advised to obtain appropriate insurance coverage against them. Retention of tickets, reservations, or package after issuance shall constitute a consent to the above and an agreement on your part to convey the contents hereof to your travel companions.

AIR TRAVEL: You can simplify your air-travel arrangements by taking advantage of **Holland America's "Fly Cruise" Program**. The following per-person, economy-class prices for travel to and from the listed home city air gateways include transfers to and from the *Oosterdam* in San Diego, CA. First-Class air is available upon request. You cannot utilize frequent flyer points to upgrade these airfares to First Class.

AL	Birmingham	$614	FL	Orlando	$554	MI	Detroit	$564	NC	Greensboro	$604	TX	Austin	$364
	Mobile	$554		Pensacola	$674		Grand Rapids	$474		Raleigh/Durham	$614		Dallas/Ft. Worth	$474
AR	Little Rock	$594		Tampa	$554	MN	Mnpls/St. Paul	$534	OK	Oklahoma City	$494		El Paso	$354
AZ	Phoenix	$374	GA	Atlanta	$564	MO	Kansas City	$514		Tulsa	$374		Houston	$474
	Tucson	$274	HI	Honolulu	$734		Springfield	$454	OH	Akron/Canton	$534		San Antonio	$434
CA	Fresno	$264	ID	Boise	$424		St. Louis	$494		Cincinnati	$534	TN	Knoxville	$674
	Los Angeles	$254	IL	Chicago	$504	MT	Billings	$534		Cleveland	$444		Memphis	$594
	Oakland	$274		Peoria	$514	NE	Omaha	$534		Columbus	$474		Nashville	$684
	Sacramento	$324	IN	Ft. Wayne	$614	NV	Las Vegas	$264		Dayton	$614	UT	Salt Lake City	$414
	San Francisco	$284		Indianapolis	$444		Reno	$274	OR	Portland	$404	VA	Norfolk	$634
	San Jose	$284	IA	Cedar Rapids	$534	NJ	Newark	$504		Medford	$424		Richmond	$584
CO	Col. Springs	$474		Des Moines	$554	NM	Albuquerque	$584	PA	Allentown	$524	WA	Seattle	$384
	Denver	$544	KS	Wichita	$484	NY	Albany	$584		Harrisburg	$504		Spokane	$544
CT	Hartford	$604	KY	Lexington	$534		Buffalo	$574		Philadelphia	$514	WI	Madison	$594
DC	Washington - DCA	$664		Louisville	$534		New York - JFK	$544		Pittsburgh	$524		Milwaukee	$554
	Washington - IAD	$614	LA	New Orleans	$614		New York - LGA	$514	RI	Providence	$584			
FL	Ft. Lauderdale	$514	ME	Portland	$684		Rochester	$584	SC	Charleston	$624			
	Jacksonville	$584	MD	Baltimore	$534		Syracuse	$654		Columbia	$654			
	Miami	$594	MA	Boston	$564	NC	Charlotte	$594		Greenville	$644			

IMPORTANT NOTES: **1.** These air add-ons apply to the cruise or cruise + pre- or post-cruise package. All transfers for air/sea passengers are included. **2.** Should you elect to provide your own air transportation, note that transfers from the airport to the *Oosterdam* (Port of San Diego) are not included, but are available for purchase $32pp roundtrip. Schedule your arrival in San Diego (SAN) leaving plenty of time for flight delays! Arrive no later than 1:30pm on November 11th. Return flights from San Diego should not be arranged before 11:00am on November 18th. **3.** Should you wish to deviate your air from the "standard" schedule, Holland America Line charges $50pp for this service. All requests must be sent in writing to The Cruise Authority. Air deviation fees are non-refundable. **4.** Any special seat assignments or other requests must be made directly with the participating air carrier. You will receive your air schedule approximately 30 days prior to departure. **5.** Fees will apply to any changes to existing air reservations made within 65 days of travel or deletion/cancellation of the Fly-Cruise Plan from your booking within this same time period.

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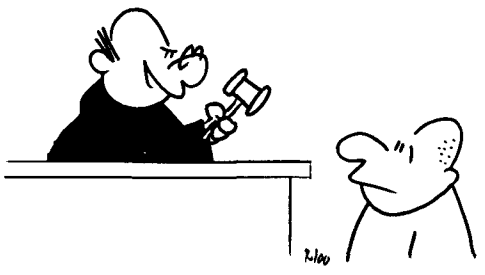
HELP

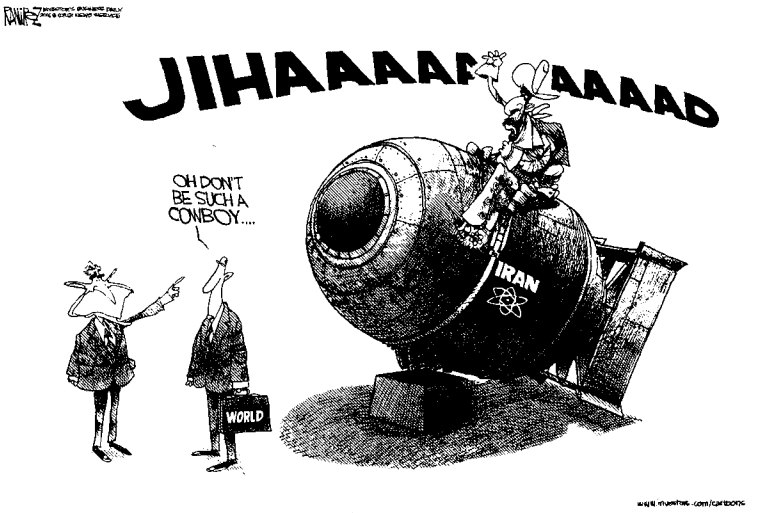
New Hampshire–Bound

Ignoring cries of No! and EEK!,
John Kerry, there again last week,
Insisted it was for '06
And not, ye gods, '08; though hicks—
A term he uses when with friends—
Appeared to get the bends
When John stopped for a walkabout.
Hillary? Talk returned to trout.

—W. H. von Dreele



"Your housing worries are over!"



GIVE ME A BREAK

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the long view

ROB LONG

Welcome to the United States!

We're so glad you could join us!

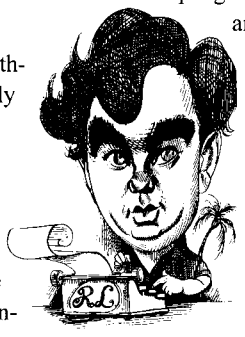
We know you've had an exhausting journey, so we promise to make this process as simple and fun as possible!

We know that you have your choice of countries to sneak into, and we're pleased that you've chosen to sneak into ours. You're an important and irreplaceable part of our economy, and we want you to know we appreciate your enthusiasm in skirting our standard immigration procedures.

By now you've had something to eat and drink, and you've been issued your official Newcomer T-Shirt, slippers, and amenity kit for your brief stay here in our Intake Facility.

The following questionnaire was developed as a result of the Amnesty & Open Arms Act of 2007. As you make your way through the questions, please feel free to ask any member of the Welcome & Transition Staff—recognizable by their blue jumpsuits—for help. And thanks again for coming!

If you can read this sentence without difficulty, please go directly to Question 1.



If you cannot read this, please request a Welcome Packet in your native language. If no packet is available in your native language: Congratulations! Your civil rights have been violated and you may be eligible to participate in a class-action suit against the federal government. Please wave over a member of the Newcomer Legal Counseling & Support Staff—recognizable by their orange jumpsuits—and gesture confusedly until they give you the proper form.

NEW NEW NEW

This questionnaire and other U.S. citizenship information are now available as podcasts! Please ask a member of the Newcomer New Technology Welcome Staff—recognizable by their green jumpsuits—to introduce you to this exciting new technology.

If you do not have an iPod: Congratulations! Your civil rights have been violated pursuant to the Openness & Generosity Act of 2007, in which newcomers are guaranteed "access" to all forms of "information technology." You may qualify for a new or reconditioned iPod and extensive iPod training. Please wave over a member of the Extension of Services Staff—recognizable by their red jumpsuits—and point in a variety of indistinct directions until your meaning is clear.

>>>SPECIAL SECTION:
PLEASE READ<<<

The American English Simplification Act of 2007 requires all newcomers to be able to adequately summarize the key moments in American history, and to show reasonable proficiency in humming and/or whistling the national anthem. As that act is currently facing a variety of court challenges, at present we are ONLY requiring that newcomers show a basic familiarity with ANY television program currently being broadcast on an established television network. Please note that this INCLUDES programs on the Univision and Telemundo networks. Thanks for your understanding.

SECTION I

Question 1: Are you presently here in the United States?

If you answered YES to Question 1, please proceed to Section II of this form.

If you answered NO to Question 1, please complete this form as best you can and hand it to the first member of the Welcome & Intake Staff—recognizable by their purple jumpsuits—you see after crossing the border.

SECTION II

Congratulations! You have successfully sneaked across the American border and are five minutes away from legal American citizenship!

If you DID NOT sneak across the American border, please STOP filling out this form and wave over a member of the Immigration Enforcement Staff—recognizable by their black jumpsuits—for immediate deportation.

NEW NEW NEW

Pursuant to the Newcomer Rights & Services Act of 2007, please answer the following questions:

Did you at any time during your border crossing suffer from thirst, nervousness and/or anxiety, rapid heartbeat, gastrointestinal distress, or any other related disorder?

Was your clothing torn and/or soiled during your experience?

If you answered YES to either of the above questions: Congratulations! Your civil rights have been violated and you are eligible to participate in two class-action suits against the federal government. Please wave over a member of the Rights & Services Support Staff—recognizable by their sequined jumpsuits—and point frantically to this section until you are handed money.

If you answered NO to either of the above questions, please proceed to Section III.

SECTION III

Congratulations! You're an American citizen! Please sign the form below to receive the benefits of American citizenship immediately.

(sign here)

Congratulations! As an American citizen currently in an Intake Facility, your civil rights have officially been violated. You are eligible to participate in a class-action suit against the federal government. Please wave over a member of the Citizens' Rights Support Staff—recognizable by their suede jumpsuits—and wave this form in an excited fashion until you are issued a check and a lapel pin of the flag of your choice.

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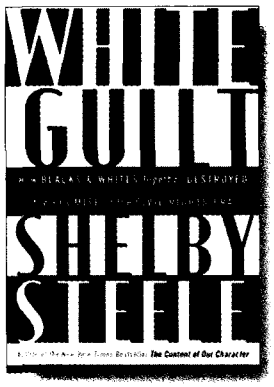
The Guilt Trip



White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era, by Shelby Steele (HarperCollins, 192 pp., $24.95)

JOHN MCWHORTER

SHELBY STEELE casts *White Guilt* as an internal monologue on a solitary car trip, undertaken as the Monica Lewinsky scandal was erupting. It occurs to Steele that if Dwight D. Eisenhower had been discovered to have engaged in such sexual escapades, he would have been out of a job in short order. On the other hand, it is rumored that Eisenhower used the N-word occasionally in private conversations—and Steele points out that if Clinton had been heard doing the same, he'd have been on the street in a second. In the late 1960s, he writes, "race replaced sex as the primary focus of America's moral seriousness."

His extended reflection revisits the penetrating insights of his previous books, *The Content of Our Character* and *A Dream Deferred*, both of which were—to recruit and redirect what Woodrow Wilson said after viewing *The Birth of a Nation*—"history written with lightning, and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true." Steele recounts growing up in the segregated America of the 1950s, joining the herd to become a black militant in the late 1960s, only to realize twenty years on that there was a lack of fit between these "Right on!" politics and his actual life—and his sense of logic. Steele has a crucial authority in that his lifespan and experience allow him to testify from three black lives: working in lousy jobs under Jim Crow, storming a college president's office as a Black Power protester, and finally standing firm as a renegade "black conservative."

The countercultural revolution conclusively divested white Americans of the moral authority they had always enjoyed. From then on, the culture has allowed whites moral legitimacy only with the requirement that they dissociate from racism. The problem is that showing that one is not racist is not the same as actually helping black people, or even treating them as full human beings.

In the late 1960s, 'race replaced sex as the primary focus of America's moral seriousness.'

Whites' new interest in not looking racist played tragically into a rip that the post-civil-rights era left in the black psychological fabric. The official script is that the urban riots and angry politics were simply a response to oppression. This is a mistake: If it were not, then slavery would have been impossible to maintain. Black America's problem now was not oppression but, ironically, freedom.

Steele notes that for all groups recently freed from oppression, "freedom shows them their underdevelopment and their inability to compete as equals." Once racism had become the new pedophilia in terms of social incorrectness, blacks were presented with a tempting strategy for dealing with this insecurity: seeking validation in the theatrics of "black rage." "Anger is acted out by the oppressed only when real weakness is perceived in the oppressor"—and blacks were now assured that whites would play their part in what Steele has elsewhere described as a dance, dutifully concurring that racism is the source of all black problems.

Since then, many blacks have—perplexingly—seen strength in their insistence on weakness: "Black militancy became, in fact, a militant belief in white power and a correspondingly militant denial of black power." Steele gets at the heart of this. With whites now founding their sense of morality on their openness to black grievance, "Black Power" became a psychological crutch for blacks. Its failure to produce tangible benefits for blacks was beside the point; its attraction was psychological. Steele fell for it himself for a while: "This identity was suddenly the source of a wonderful new self-esteem . . . 'being black' aligned me with one of the world's great stories of long-suffering innocence." Bizarrely, black fans of racial preferences now casually champion what used to be called tokenism, since being a noble black victim has come to trump personal excellence.

Meanwhile, because few could fail to notice an incongruity between the apocalyptic tone of Black Power rhetoric and an America in the process of passing landmark civil-rights laws and offering blacks ever-widening job opportunities, there began what Steele calls a Marxist reinterpretation of racism: the idea that the problem is "systemic" racism and "white privilege," abstract but inescapable, and thus always available as a motivation for more aggrievement rhetoric. This idea has indeed become a badge of the moral legitimacy Steele pegs whites as seeking: When I am on a panel with a liberal black speaker, I can always expect white audiences of a certain demographic to give a brief, dutiful ripple of applause as soon as that person utters the term "systemic racism."

As always, Steele's writing is a marvel of lapidary elegance. His vignette in

Mr. McWhorter is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author most recently of *Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America.*

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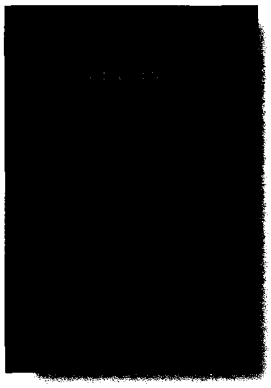
which a white self-professed "architect" of the Great Society attacks Steele at a party for dismissing the achievements of his cohort is exquisite. The man admits that the programs mostly failed, but supposes that we should still try the same kinds of things again. Steele asks him how he would do things differently now, only to have the man sputter ever more angrily about how grateful poor blacks had been when the programs began. That is, the man was interested not in the people's welfare, but in their affirmation of himself as not a racist.

Steele is also to be commended for outing Maureen Dowd as having had the same motivations. In a 2003 column on Clarence Thomas's dissent in the Supreme Court's decision on affirmative action, she assailed Thomas for his "ingratitude" concerning such policies. Steele calls the column "vile," which, I think, is too kind; it was the most repulsive 700 words I have ever read. Steele cuts right to the heart of the doubletalk: "We'll throw you a bone like affirmative action if you'll just let us reduce you to your race so we can take moral authority for 'helping' you." Steele caps it with: "When they called you a nigger back in the days of segregation, at least they didn't ask you to be grateful."

I do wish, however, that Steele had gone to a certain amount of effort to engage typical objections to arguments like his. There are reasonable readers whom Steele's points could reach if only he were to do some brush-clearing. For example, at one point he says: "It must be acknowledged that blacks are no longer oppressed in America." But many black readers will object that black people even today experience what is often described as a "daily litany" of racist slights, that black people get worse mortgage and car-insurance deals than whites, and so on. There are effective answers to things like this, but in their absence, Steele's work largely reaches a certain segment of white America, while being decried—mistakenly—as "oversimplified" by too many sensible black people. This is unfortunate, for the simple reason that there is no writer who deserves black America's allegiance more than Shelby Steele. **NR**

Leo Strauss 101



Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism, by Steven B. Smith (Chicago, 256 pp., $32.50)

EDWARD FESER

An enormous amount of nonsense has been written about Leo Strauss over the last several years. Liberal journalists who appear never to have read a word of the long-dead philosopher's work assure us that the war in Iraq is a practical application of his ideas. Tim Robbins's anti-war play *Embedded* portrays Strauss as a sinister ideologue who promoted deception of the masses as a means of fostering a militant nationalism. Nor has the nonsense all come from the political left. Conservative writer Daniel Flynn suggests, in his book *Intellectual Morons*, that Straussian methods of textual analysis may have led the Defense Department into a faulty reading of pre-war intelligence vis-à-vis Saddam's purported WMD stockpiles.

Yale professor Steven Smith's book is intended, in part, to dispel such myths, and provides a sober and lucid overview of Strauss's thinking about matters of philosophy, politics, and religion, albeit from Smith's interpretive point of view. His emphasis is on Strauss's defense of liberal democracy as a solution to what he called the "theologico-political problem"; in Smith's telling, Strauss's defense rests on a kind of philosophical skepticism. Smith is clearly sympathetic to Strauss's views as he understands them; he succeeds in his attempt to show that those views bear little resemblance to the caricatures now in circulation, and are worthy of the serious consideration of liberals and conservatives alike. Unfortunately, in his desire to distance Strauss from Bush-administration policy in particular and neoconservatism in general, he sometimes overstates his case. More significantly, he fails to consider some potential difficulties facing the Straussian worldview as he has interpreted it. Still, his take on Strauss is instructive, and if he doesn't answer all the important questions he at least raises them.

In this, Smith is very Straussian indeed. Strauss understood philosophy as concerned with the "permanent problems"—traditional questions about the nature and grounds of justice, the existence of God, and so forth—that are "permanent" because, it is alleged, no settled answers to these questions are possible. In Strauss's view, the thinker who decisively chooses one set of answers over the others has ceased to be a philosopher and become a "sectarian." But if philosophy is concerned with constant questioning and discussing, rather than with providing solutions or upholding hallowed dogmas, it poses a potential threat to traditional societies. Hence the "theologico-political problem," the inevitable conflict between philosophy and divine revelation, reason and faith, "Athens and Jerusalem."

On Smith's interpretation of Strauss, liberal democracy provides the best solution to this problem, or at least (as Churchill would have put it) the worst except for all the others. Its tendency to foster toleration and open-mindedness recommends it to the philosopher as the sort of regime most conducive to his way of life, and its allowance for private religious discrimination in exchange for neutrality between religions in the public sphere makes it possible for traditional believers to practice their ancient ways as they see fit without threatening the liberty of non-believers to choose to do otherwise.

And yet liberal democracies have dogmas of their own, especially egalitarian ones. They also tend to cater to the lowest

Mr. Feser's most recent book is *The Philosophy of Mind: A Short Introduction*.

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tastes and impulses, so that while they value science and technology for the consumer goods they provide, democracies make high culture and higher moral sensibilities difficult to maintain. This in turn threatens the stability and longevity of the democratic regime itself. For these reasons Strauss believed that a true friend of democracy ought never to be its "flatterer." The philosopher ought, in his view, to uphold the older ideal of democracy as a "universal aristocracy," in the face of the vulgar "mass democracy" that has displaced it. This requires defending and practicing liberal education as a means of inculcating an understanding and respect for the permanent problems, and thereby producing an elite fit to govern on the basis of wisdom and merit rather than birth. It also requires a certain degree of caution, since—given the inherently elitist character of liberal education—the philosopher is bound to find himself at odds to some extent even with a democratic regime.

Here is where critics of Strauss and his followers often accuse them of advocating a resort to the "noble lie," and in particular of a false populism that cynically caters in public to fundamentalist religious believers whose faith Straussians privately reject, as a way of upholding public order and traditional morality. But, as Smith notes, this accusation is misconceived on two counts. First of all, while Strauss was not himself an orthodox believer, neither was he a convinced atheist. Since whether or not to accept a purported divine revelation is itself one of the "permanent" questions, orthodoxy must always remain an option equally as defensible as unbelief. Second, what Strauss was in favor of was neither lying nor the active promotion of any particular doctrine, but rather mere tact, silence, or—at worst—obfuscation where one's teaching might seem to threaten the unsophisticated but decent opinions of the people who make up the bulk of society.

This alleged predilection for the "noble lie" is something Strauss is supposed to have inherited from Plato, and, in general, Strauss regarded his political philosophy as Platonic in character. Here another controversial aspect of Strauss's work comes into play, namely his idiosyncratic interpretations of many of the great thinkers of the past. Plato is often regarded as having proposed, at least as an instructive ideal, a "utopian" society that can only be described as totalitarian, but, as Smith tells us, Strauss considered this merely an ironic warning against the dangers of utopian thinking.

Strauss also showed little interest in Plato's famous "Theory of Forms," the idea that there are timeless and objective essences of things, existing in a realm apart from either the human mind or the material world, and knowledge of which is the goal of philosophical inquiry. This view is typically regarded as the paradigm of a philosophy committed to the existence of objective truth, and it has had an enormous impact on the history of Western thought, and indeed Western civilization in general. Yet Strauss was dismissive of it, regarding it as a "fantastic" and "utterly incredible" doctrine. Plato's real concern, in Strauss's view, was similar to his own: not contemplation of the Forms but rather the activity of contemplation itself, the asking of the permanent questions rather than the answering of them.

Strauss's glib dismissal of the Forms was oddly reminiscent of the scientism or positivism whose stranglehold over modern intellectual life he was wont to criticize. Furthermore, Strauss's insistence that the genuine philosopher must be skeptical about the possibility of finding solutions to philosophical problems risks providing aid and comfort to the relativism he believed posed the greatest threat to modern liberal democracies. To be sure, to say that we cannot discover objective answers doesn't entail that they don't exist, but this is a distinction that is bound to be lost on the average non-philosopher, for whom the view that no answers are possible sounds little different from the view that every answer is as good as every other. These are issues Smith would have done well to explore.

Smith is also unconvincing, and occasionally unfair, when attempting to divorce Strauss's thought from recent neoconservative policy. He tells us that he does "not regard Strauss as a conservative (neo- or otherwise) but rather as a friend of liberal democracy"—as if being conservative (neo- or otherwise) excluded being in favor of liberal democracy, and indeed, as if neoconservatives were not frequently accused of being too eager to spread liberal democracy around the globe! He informs us that Strauss was a staunch Zionist, resisted internationalism of the sort enshrined in the U.N., and was critical of liberalism's lack of self-confidence in the face of Soviet Communism. Smith even finds echoes of this failure of self-confidence in the "self-doubt, if not self-contempt" evinced by many liberal intellectuals in response to the rise of Islamism. Yet after all this, he peremptorily asserts that Strauss's writings imply a critique of the war in Iraq.

Smith's justification for this claim is that Strauss would have been skeptical of the utopianism inherent in pro-war rhetoric about bringing an "end to evil"; for evil, Strauss would have insisted, cannot be entirely eliminated in this life. But surely such political boilerplate must be distinguished from actual policy. To my knowledge, the Bush administration hasn't proposed an invasion of Hell. And its willingness to ally the United States with the likes of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia surely proves that the idealism, however heartfelt, has indeed been tempered by an understanding of geopolitical reality. One would think a student of Strauss, of all people, would know how to read between the lines, and understand that stirring rhetoric is part of the job description of the statesman. **NR**

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Turks Young and Old

Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire, by Caroline Finkel (Basic, 660 pp., $35)

JOHN WILSON

In his *Lectures on Modern History*, posthumously published exactly a century ago and now available in a handsome edition from Liberty Fund, Lord Acton observed that "Modern History begins under stress of the Ottoman Conquest." Does that judgment surprise you? We've been hearing—endlessly—how everything in the Islamic sphere today is to be understood as a response to "modernity," variously construed. Yet Acton says that modern history itself—the world system that is still with us, however modified, with its origins in Europe—began as a *response* to the Ottoman conquest.

The legendary date for the founding of the Ottoman Empire is 1299, when Osman—the leader of a loose confederation of migrants from the steppes of Central Asia who had carved out territory in Anatolia (in present-day Turkey)—had a prophetic dream. In this reverie, a tree sprouted from his navel, and the shade of its branches covered the entire world. The holy man to whom he related the dream explained that Osman was chosen by God to sire a great dynasty; he gave Osman his daughter in marriage. From these humble beginnings a mighty Islamic empire grew, spreading throughout the Middle East and Eastern and Central Europe before expiring in the early 20th century after a long decline. This six-century span is Caroline Finkel's subject.

The opening of the Ottoman archives in Istanbul to Western scholars not long after World War II has given historians a wealth of material, and behind Finkel's book are hundreds of specialized studies. Moreover, as she notes in her preface, she has lived in Turkey for 15 years; her knowledge is not limited to book learning.

Finkel's survey is most valuable as a kind of reconnaissance, full of dynastic struggles, battles and decrees, unfamiliar names and places, and surprising intersections with other histories (European, Byzantine) that describe the same events from very different angles. It's a book that every interested reader—old Ottoman hands excepted—should wade through, simply to become better acquainted with the territory. But be warned. Alas, and very much contrary to the dust-jacket praise from novelist Orhan Pamuk, who knows better, Finkel is a terrible writer. She recounts event after event with no sense of pace, rather like one of those bores who insist on telling you about a movie you simply must see, then launching into an unstoppable scene-by-scene chronicle.

Ottoman policy was pragmatic, but the empire was founded on a vision of the universal triumph of Islam, driven by conquest.

Even so, some salient themes emerge, running both with and against the grain of Finkel's intent. With: the extent to which Ottoman policy was pragmatic, often involving alliances with one set of infidels against another. (Only very rarely could the Christian states muster anything approaching a united front.) Against: the extent to which, from the very beginning, the empire was founded on a vision of the universal triumph of Islam, driven by conquest. In the 11th century, Turkic peoples relatively recently converted to Islam conquered large areas in what had been Christian Anatolia, preparing the ground for Osman. And, going back one step further, the conversion of those peoples came as a consequence of the explosive spread of Islam in the first waves of Muslim conquest. If Finkel is quite right to emphasize that the self-consciously religious imperative for conquest was only intermittently invoked, she is wrong not to acknowledge its potency over the whole arc of Ottoman history and all the way to our present moment.

Indeed, in her defensiveness, her determination at all costs to provide a corrective to what she regards as invidious characterizations of the Ottomans by earlier writers (she is most ungenerous to her predecessors in this respect), Finkel undermines her own project. It is sensible to say, as she does at the outset, that we should "interpret Ottoman history by the same standard as other histories," but the next sentence develops this thought in a way that is both absurd and self-defeating: "There are unique aspects of the history of every state, of course; but to emphasize them rather than the aspects that are comparable to the history of other states seems to me to miss the point."

It should be needless to say that the historian is not forced to choose one or the other. We should not approach Ottoman history as if it were a freakish outlier; neither should we fail to perceive what is distinctive, as we recognize the Englishness of the English, say, as against the Frenchness of the French. Instead of trusting that her readers are grown-ups who recognize that any human society is a complex compound of good and evil, that some places at some times are nevertheless more conducive to human flourishing than others, that we should be quick to learn and not hasten to condemn but neither should we allow our judgment to be paralyzed—instead of this, Finkel is always making excuses, hedging, or omitting altogether those "aspects of Ottoman history" that crude types are likely to seize upon.

The exercises in exculpation are sometimes inadvertently comical. Finkel notes that, like the Mongols, the Ottomans did

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not limit succession "to any particular member of the ruling dynasty: The question of who should succeed was a matter for God to determine." Often, as in European states—think of Henry VIII and his determination to have a son—God employed human agency to make His will clear. Hence the Ottoman custom whereby the son who seemed poised to assume the throne upon the death of the reigning sultan found it prudent to murder his brothers (in many cases half-brothers, since the sultan would typically father sons by a number of wives and concubines). One such instance recounted by Finkel took place in 1574, when Selim II died and his eldest son became Murad III. With an absolutely straight face, Finkel quotes the account of Murad's Jewish physician:

> But Sultan [Murad], who was so compassionate as to be unable to see blood shed, waited eighteen hours, in which he refused to sit on the Imperial throne or to make public his arrival in the City, seeking and discussing a way first to free his nine brothers of the blood who were in the Seraglio. . . . In order that he should not break the law of the Ottoman state . . . weeping, he sent the mutes to strangle them, giving nine handkerchiefs with his own hands to the chief of the mutes.

A very sensitive man. As Finkel comments, "murder was the price of avoiding the civil strife which often attended the succession of a sultan."

Less amusing are Finkel's paeans to the Ottomans' wonderfully tolerant treatment of Christians in their empire. Christianity, like Islam, is a conversionist faith. You've heard of the Great Commission? Christians in the empire were forbidden to fulfill this fundamental obligation, while Muslims were strictly forbidden, often on pain of death, to convert to Christianity. (Sound familiar?) Churches could be arbitrarily seized and converted to mosques or destroyed, the property sold. And so it went.

If you make it through Finkel's book, as I hope you will despite the barriers, you should reward yourself by reading something by Ivo Andric, the Nobel Prize–winning novelist born in Bosnia, of Croatian ancestry. His fiction offers another window on the world shaped by Osman's dream. **NR**

A Man Named Jed

New Art City: Manhattan at Mid-Century, by Jed Perl (Knopf, 656 pp., $35)

JAMES PANERO

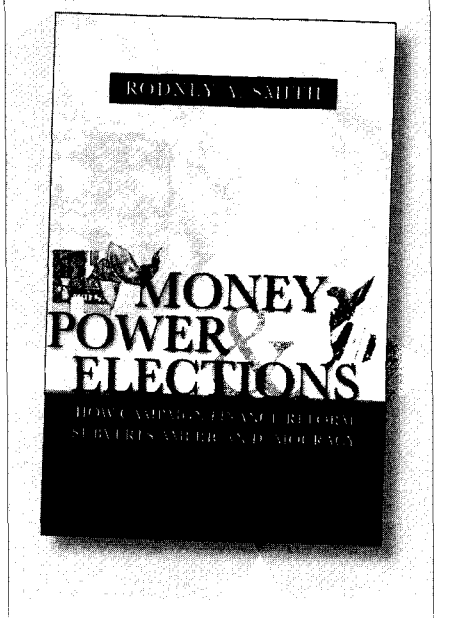
THE last time I saw Jed Perl, he was bounding down the long ramp of New York's Guggenheim Museum, just as I was hoofing it up. The occasion was the press preview for "David Smith: A Centennial." In my bag, I happened to be carrying Perl's massive new book, *New Art City*: a Sisyphean labor of a read, the type of book you curse for its length as you turn the page for more. Hauling it up the endless spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's museum, I found the moment appropriately poetic.

"Love the book, Jed," I panted.

"Ten years of work," he smiled, shifting down to second gear. "And if you see me dead in the street, you know whom to suspect . . ." This was a reference to Perl's latest art-world polemic, which had just then appeared as a cover story in *The New Republic*. The suspect in question was the main target of the article: Glenn D. Lowry, the organization-man director of the Museum of Modern Art.

The exchange on the ramp reminded

Mr. Panero is managing editor of *The New Criterion* and co-editor of a new book, *The Dartmouth Review Pleads Innocent* (ISI).



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me that Perl's preferred mode of discourse—and, indeed, his best mode—has always been the confrontational. *New Art City* may be a sociological history, a reanimation of an art scene 50 years past, but its arguments muscle their way right on through to the world we read about in Perl's criticism for *The New Republic*. Just as at the birth of modernism Alois Riegl identified a *Kunstwollen*, or "will to form," here we find the *Jedwollen*—or Jed Perl's will to confront the orthodoxies of today's art establishment.

The book is freighted with confrontation. Beneath its breathy excitement, it presents what Perl's supporters might call an account of the decline and fall of the modernist empire—and what his detractors might well denounce as a conservative history of modernism. "Conservative" is admittedly a strange word to apply to Perl: While he cut his teeth at magazines such as Hilton Kramer's *New Criterion* (where I work), Perl is no political conservative. His conservatism—like that of some others on the political left—is an aesthetic one, concerned with the defense of modernism's constructive practices, and of argument and aesthetic discrimination as opposed to vacuous toleration and nihilism. Perl's war is against the art world's refusal to fight. From mid-century on, this passive-aggressive sentiment has crept in to become art's dominant disposition; in *New Art City*, Perl sets out to distill the combative qualities he sees as the essence of modernism.

The mid-century modernism discussed in this book is about challenge—and the book can itself be a challenge to its readers. Here one is presented with spiraling thematic chapters that describe the "living theater" of New York, where "everybody believed that to get together and talk was to participate in this play whose scenes and acts took place in real time and real space." Perl attempts "a searching description, one by one, of the dramatis personae, of the proliferation of actors, each with his or her particular sense of things," but in so doing he describes the 1950s in what seems like real time.

There are endless quotations, discursive asides, and milling hordes of personalities. In just a few pages of Chapter 6, "A Splendid Modesty," one encounters such cultural touchstones as Meyer Schapiro, Harold Rosenberg, Arshile Gorky, Thomas Hess, Lionel Trilling (on Henry James's *Princess Casamassima*), Mary McCarthy, Peggy Guggenheim, Dwight Macdonald, Krishnamurti, and Black Mountain College—where "the creative act was an act that grew and flourished amid a flurry of crosscurrents and competing ideas and ideals. . . . Willem and Elaine de Kooning were there, and Merce Cunningham and John Cage and the sculptor Richard Lippold and Buckminster Fuller." At times *New Art City* becomes what Randall Jarrell said of André Malraux's *Voices of Silence*: "not art history, exactly, but a kind of free fantasia on themes from the history of art."

In Perl's wear-you-down, last-man-talking, overly-hyphenated-and-alliterated prose style, the artists of the 1950s do not just "talk": They "talk and talk." Rather than "many artists," we read about "many, many artists." It's not "Picasso, Miró, and Matisse," but rather "Picasso and Miró and Matisse." Nor is this authorial flexing incidental to Perl's book: It goes to the heart of his esteem for modern art at its most muscular, chaotic, and sporting. As a writer Perl inhabits the qualities of his subject matter.

Arthur C. Danto remarked, in the magazine *Bookforum*, that Perl writes of the mid-century as if he "himself had lived that history—instead of the history he actually lived, wishing it had never happened." But this remark is unfair. Perl's history of modernism is the one we continue to live through, certainly in today's New York, if often in its negation. It also explains how, to take one example, the mid-century sculptures of the tough-minded David Smith can still take on what Louis Mumford called an "audacious failure" of a space for art—designed by another tough-headed modernist, Frank Lloyd Wright—and produce something new. In one of Smith's constructivist *Cubi* flexing up through the heart of the Guggenheim Museum, one finds a triumph that is very much of our own time: Smith's development as a sculptor, from surrealist to constructivist, demonstrates quite precisely the push-pull of modernism that Perl describes.

In *New Art City*, Perl picks up the story of art where his 1988 book *Paris Without End* left off. The title of art-world capital

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

for James Michener

Let it come. Why should you hold back that power
When you know you must truly mirror the gale?
What if you are only a fiction, a shadow—
A figment, a phantom flying illusory sails?
You are the numinous opposite of Noah
Doomed never to land, descried on all seas,
Glimpsed pale in terror 'twixt flashes of lightning,
A mountain of water boiling over your masts.
Let the wind shriek through you, let the fantastic
Desire to cut through every snarling white crest
Drive you over the cries of the shipwrecked and dying.
For you see it clearly, the impossible cape
Of fools who think they have rounded it
Forever, inhaling the green lee of the earth.
But you, Dutchman, drive on against death.

—RICHARD O'CONNELL

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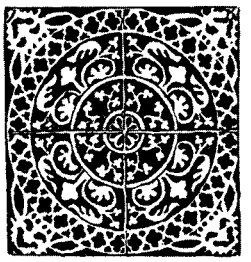
was New York's spoil following World War II, and with it came modernism's contradictory impulses of construction and annihilation. This tension developed at first, in what Perl calls the "paint-happy 1950s," into the vernacular of Abstract Expressionism. Here constructive forces produced two great urban academies for modern art, first the Hans Hofmann School and, later, the New York Studio School, which remains a presence in the city. "For Hofmann," writes Perl, "push-and-pull was a dream of what life could be, a dream simultaneously rooted in the dynamic relationship between one form and another, and in the dynamic relationship between a person and an environment." Perl extends the tension of the picture plane to include the theater of urban life.

The exposition of the "dynamic relationships," or "dialectics," comes two by two. But often the distinctions turn into hagiographic haze, as, for example, when Perl says that "the closer you look at the artistic thinking of the 1940s and 1950s, the more overlapping dialectical dynamics you will see—whether the dialectic involved [in] the relationship between the artist and tradition, or between the artist and the world beyond the studio, or the push-and-pull of forms in a particular painting or sculpture." Sometimes "overlapping dialectical dynamics" can be better understood as simply "stuff happening."

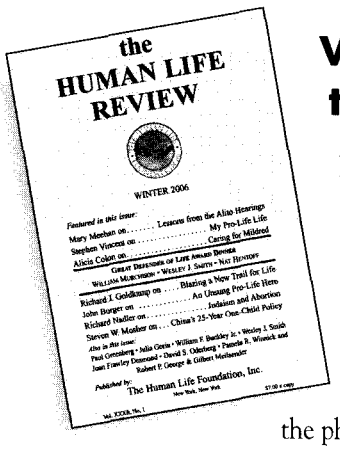
Perl's story heats up when modernism enters the 1960s. Commercialism, along with art's entry into the popular consciousness, brings Sears, Roebuck and other corporations into the art business. (The actor Vincent Price, strange as it may sound, was Sears's chief curator.) Meanwhile the Museum of Modern Art becomes "a kind of central committee for the cause of modern art," overriding the artistic individualism of the previous decade. "The museum that had become famous by reporting on the making of history," Perl writes, "was coming dangerously close to faking history." Similarly, in the Zen-like work of the young Frank Stella, "academic discourse brought about a new development in painting." Red-bloodedness was fast becoming passé, and "by 1960 the art world was entering its own Age of Criticism." In response, modernism's abstract legacy formed the "foundation for a newly forceful representational art." Empirical painters like Fairfield Porter, and the artists of New York's silver age of modernism, turned from the muscular heights of abstract expressionism to revel in the smaller glories of the domestic and everyday.

Yet even by the early 1950s, against the backdrop of the constructive developments taking place, New York had already been making way for the pernicious reintroduction of what Perl calls the "to-hell-with-everything gestures" of Dada, a minor movement from the early part of the century. This included the rediscovery of its slippery figurehead, Marcel Duchamp. "In my estimation," Duchamp told *Newsweek* in 1952, "there's no hope for the future of art at least for the next 25 years." The words proved prophetic; Duchamp's future came even sooner than expected. Perl writes: "The story of Duchamp's apotheosis in the decade leading up to his death in 1968 cannot be understood except in the context of the new audience for art. . . . Younger artists embraced Duchamp and even, sometimes, got to know him, beginning with Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, those two cheerfully self-absorbed nihilists, who were quickly followed by a generation of whatever-the-market-will-bear nihilists, the generation of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein."



Duchamp's orthodox nihilism has insinuated its way into the contemporary art world, not by engaging the arguments of modernism, but by avoiding the conversation and mocking its terms of debate. In doing so, Dada's legacy has—as Thomas Hess wrote of Duchamp himself in 1965—"consolidated a position that is practically invulnerable to serious criticism."

Perl's account of the mid-20th-century art world is, in spite of its stylistic excesses, fascinating and instructive. In much of contemporary art, the push-and-pull forces of modernism have long since pulled away from the artistic struggle. *New Art City* is here to make sure we remember the fight. **NR**



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■ FILM ■

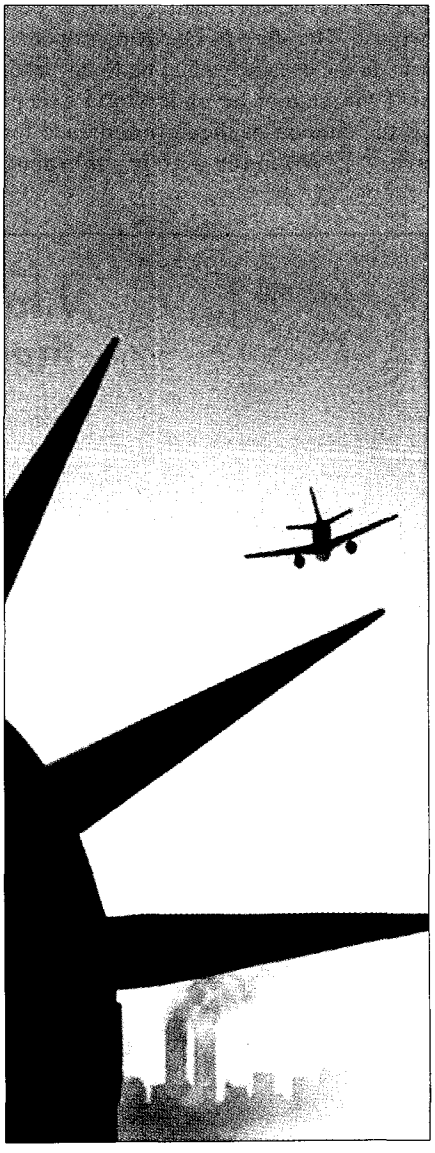
Murder, Up Close

ROSS G. DOUTHAT

UNITED 93, Paul Greengrass's audacious recreation of what may be the worst ninety-odd minutes in American history, is the most unbearable film I've ever watched. It's not a sad story, or a moving one—it didn't raise a faintly pleasant lump in my throat, like *Old Yeller* or *Titanic*. Instead, it pinned me to my seat; it made me sob and cringe, grind my teeth and look away. It felt less like a movie than an assault.

Is this an endorsement, or a criticism? Days after seeing the movie, I'm still not sure, even though it's hard to imagine how the story of Flight 93 could have been better told. Greengrass's earlier films include a gritty docudrama (*Bloody Sunday*, about the infamous 1970s massacre in Northern Ireland) and a hyperkinetic action vehicle (*The Bourne Supremacy*), and he puts both skills to good use here. *United 93* is a restrained film, despite its grueling subject matter, made without any stars—no Tom Cruise as Todd Beamer, thank God—and with every potential ounce of fat mercilessly stripped away. The screenplay is defiantly quotidian, mostly casual chatter about business trips and children waiting at home; there is no embellishment, nothing maudlin or melodramatic, and without any star-crossed-lover subplots to distract us, the film's realism is that much harder to endure. And by emphasizing the ordinariness of the people traveling on Flight 93—refusing to provide back-stories, or even names, to the people we're about to watch die—Greengrass closes the distance that would otherwise open between the plane's passengers and the audience. What happens on the flight isn't so much watched as experienced: The passengers are empty vessels, ordinary victims into which the audience's own identities are poured. They go down to death, and we go down with them.

And the story *moves*, at a horrible, wrenching, gripping pace. Greengrass cuts back and forth between the doomed flight, creeping along the runway and bearing its ill-fated passengers aloft, and the mounting chaos at air-traffic-control centers, at an FAA headquarters, at a NORAD control room. In the scenes on the ground, there's an awful disconnect between what's done, or attempted, and what actually happens—orders are barked, phone calls placed, desperate warnings sent out, and still the planes are hijacked, still their blips disappear from the radar screen, still they reappear in the worst of all possible places. The Newark air-traffic controllers turn from a fruitless attempt to raise one of the lost flights to see, through a window, the World Trade Center burning in the distance. At NORAD, the buzz of activity and terse military-speak gives way to horrified gasps as the second plane goes into the tower. At FAA headquarters, someone flicks on CNN and sees the Pentagon burning.



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On the plane itself, by contrast, there's no disconnect at all—everything is close quarters and claustrophobia, and every action produces an immediate and often deadly reaction. Greengrass doesn't need to ratchet up the tension; it ratchets on its own, and even the spasms of violence don't provide any real release. The long pregnant pause before the terrorists leap from their seats feels so unbearable that I began to root for them to move, for the nightmare to officially begin—and then it did, and I wished it hadn't. Again, I expected the moment when the passengers finally charge the terrorists to provide a sense of relief, of finality and catharsis—but the chaos that follows only heightens the nightmarishness, the feeling of a world carried downward in a widening gyre.

And yet I'm not convinced that it's a good or necessary thing to subject ourselves to the agony Greengrass so brilliantly conjures up. *United 93* is terribly real, but its very stripped-down realism ensures that it never opens out, never tries to tell us anything about September 11 that we didn't already know. Maybe it makes sense to bear witness to that day by recreating it in the most literal way possible; maybe we can't *really* remember the events unless we relive the worst of them, and experience them from the inside out. But there are moments when *United 93* feels less like a tribute to a group of victims-turned-martyrs, and more like a high-concept snuff film—like a Pearl Harbor movie that takes place entirely below decks on the USS *Arizona*, or a *Schindler's List* that never leaves the gas chamber.

After 9/11 it was often emphasized—and rightly so—that this was not just an act of murder but an act of war. But of course it was a crime as well, in which thousands of our fellow citizens were murdered in cold blood—burned alive or crushed by the falling towers, yes, but also stabbed by fanatics somewhere between the cockpit and the lavatory, and

Mr. Douthat is an associate editor at *The Atlantic*, and the author of *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class*.

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left to bleed to death in coach class. *United 93* gives us this aspect of 9/11 and little else: There is no Osama bin Laden in the film, no political context of any kind, only the burning buildings in the distance and the blood and screams at close quarters. And the question lingers, behind every frame: Do we need to see this? If someone you knew were stabbed to death by a fanatical killer, would you want to watch a painstaking recreation of his final minutes? Or, to seize a post-9/11 example, would you want to watch a minute-by-minute reenactment of Daniel Pearl's last hour of life, however bravely he faced it?

And would you participate in such a reenactment? This is one of the strangest things about *United 93*—the fact that many of the people manning the film's various control rooms are playing themselves. If you think that the actor playing FAA boss Ben Sliney does great work capturing what it must have been like to be at the center of everything, watching helplessly as it spun out of your control—well, that's because it really is Ben Sliney, hitting his marks and making us feel like we're really there, because he really was. This is an artistic move that "works," in the sense that it adds to the sense of verisimilitude, of horrifying realism. But it's also terribly weird—as if the commanders at Pearl Harbor had volunteered to play themselves in a painstaking 1944 reenactment of the debacle. (If Todd Beamer, or someone else, had miraculously survived the wreck of United 93, would Greengrass have asked him to reenact his "role" for the darting camera?)

None of this strangeness takes away from the film's power. But real art, especially art that takes on events whose wounds are still unhealed, needs to do more than stir up strong emotions in its audience. *United 93* buys its power cheaply, in a sense: Our own 9/11 experiences are still so close to the surface that a film about Flight 93's fate would churn stomachs and jerk tears no matter how badly it was made. It's to Greengrass's credit that his recreation is so technically brilliant, so unflaggingly intelligent, so scrupulously accurate. But after five years of war and remembrance, surely we deserve movies about 9/11 that ask us to do more than return to the nightmare, and to relive it. **NR**

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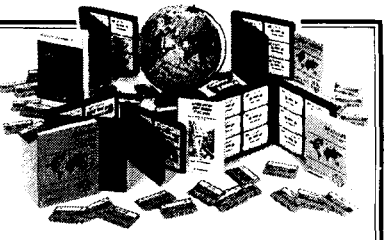

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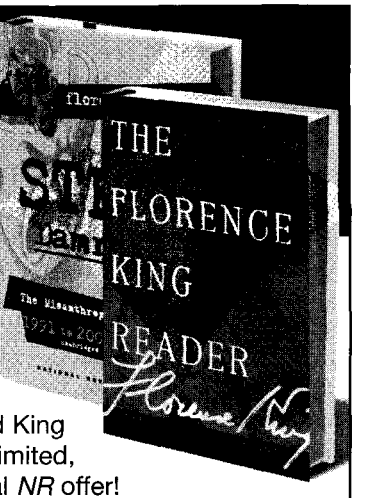

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■ CITY DESK ■

Essential Employees

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE shadow of the angel of annoyance passed over the city, and we were afraid. It looked as if the doormen would strike.

"Doormen" is headline shorthand for residential-building workers—the 25,000 doormen, porters, handymen, and elevator operators who keep 3,500 buildings in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens going. (Three thousand supers belong to the same union, Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union, but since many of them work under a contract that runs until June, they were not due to walk.) The doormen wanted more health insurance, the building owners wanted a wage freeze. In days of yore gentlemen rowed to Weehawken and shot each other. These days workers stay home, owners stay put, and everyone shoots the tenants. The last strike ran for twelve days in 1991, but we all know the drill.

Mr. and Mrs. Suburban, on their divot of lawn, are Adam and Eve, or the archetypal property owners of Blackstone, who wield "that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe." Apartment dwellers live in a vertical village, an immobile caravan in the urban desert. My apartment building—early Sixties, white brick, dull and solid as a TV business show—has twenty storeys. Subtract one for the non-existent 13th floor, and another one for the first floor, which is all lobby and rented space. There are just under 16 apartments per floor (the number diminishes slightly at the top). Assuming 3.5 people per apartment, balancing widows and families, there are about a thousand tenants. Six days a week the mail is delivered; every day of the week the Chinese takeout is delivered. All but the infants and the ill go in and out; ditto their dogs. Housekeepers, baby sitters, lovers, psychoanalytic clients, cable guys, family members from out of town (all smiles and slowness), must be announced. Hot and cold air, gas and e-mail, water and excrement, appear and disappear at command. Some of these services are subcontracted out, or performed by utilities, but most of them aren't. It takes a lot of on-site activity to keep a building running.

My building has one super, one handyman, four doormen, and three porters. There are no elevator operators, except the tenants themselves on the not-infrequent occasions when a sluggish door has to be shoved shut in order to prick the elevator into motion. Every Christmas everyone gives the building workers cash, in little envelopes with oval portholes for the presidents to peek out. We do it willingly, for the many services the workers perform. When the reading lamps from the Reagan administration give up the ghost, they install new ones. When the Kennedy-era knob on the medicine-cabinet door pops out of its mirrored base, they find another. When the refrigerator dies, they replace it, not with a brand-new one, of course, but with a working one scrounged from the basement or some other property. We could conceivably do all these things ourselves, though it would mean shlepping to Canal Street or Jersey. So there's no way. We gratefully surrender the burden to them.

A building's doormen mark the eddies of ethnic succession. When I moved in, in the late Seventies, the senior doorman was Irish-American. When he retired, the next in line was a son of Italy. Now we have eastern Europeans and Hispanics. I have read that a lot of buildings in the south Bronx employ Albanians. Yo, posses, stay out of those blood feuds. The weather is a safe, and perennially interesting, topic for everyone (for fellow tenants too, in those brief Quaker meetings of elevator rides). But many doormen have specialized interests. One loved the Yankees, one loves dogs. Another asked me about John J. Miller's book on the Olin Foundation.

When labor and management push back from the table, irreconcilable, the building changes its character. When it is fully manned, it is snug and serviceable; if not quite home, then the home of home, the place we find the place we live. When the doormen go on strike, comfort and familiarity are withdrawn. The building becomes an indifferent, perhaps hostile, shelter, something out of *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Castle*. Defoe's hero met strangeness head-on, gamely taming it. Kafka's hero despaired.

Tenants sign up for emergency duties. Garbage can no longer be thrown down the chute to the compactor. It must be collected in plastic bags on each floor, then brought down to the basement, and hoisted to the street out the garage door. Tenants sit at the front door, screening visitors—a thankless task, since inevitably someone fails to leave notice for a housekeeper, and isn't home when you call on the intercom. The housekeeper came all the way from Queens (ultimately, from Ecuador); she is only six floors from her goal; but unless you or some exiting passerby recognizes her you have to bar the door. It is at these moments that you realize you really don't know anybody in the city, or at least nobody around you. In the country, my friend told one person in the morning that he needed a new chainsaw. That day, every person he met asked what had happened to his old chainsaw. In the city we are monads (anagram: nomads) passing in the night. We could have a tenants' committee, but those have to be organized by old Jewish teachers, and they're dying off. As the building slowly fills with tweenies and their squeaking girlfriends, any possibility of organization goes glimmering.

Not that you should pity us. What we lose on the straightaway we gain on the curves, in the great race that is New York. No doubt we drive the doormen crazy with our demands. Certainly the building owners hate us, protected as many of us are by rent stabilization.

The strike was scheduled to begin at one minute after midnight. At 1:11 A.M., the negotiators settled. Was there a 70-minute walkout? I don't know, I was asleep. **NR**

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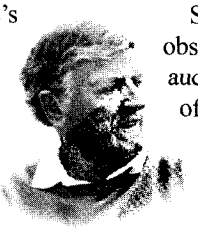
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

The Search for Decency

NEW YORK, APRIL 18

It takes re-entry into a seemingly different life to read that there is still out there something called an Indecency Code. It lives, sort of, and is administered by the Federal Communications Commission. What brought on a reminder that such a code existed was last week's movement by television networks to discipline the FCC. Their reaction was to a fine handed down against 111 television stations for running an episode of a show called *Without a Trace*, which the commission found to be indecent in that it "depicts a teen orgy as well as a teenage girl straddling and apparently engaging in intercourse with one boy while two others kissed her breast."

The plaintiffs are arguing a number of things, salient among them that the victimization by the FCC impinges on rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. There are collateral complaints, including the inconsistency of the FCC's actions, which introduces arbitrariness, injustice, and other unpleasant things.



It has been a long struggle, the attempt to salvage the very idea of indecency. A 1973 Supreme Court ruling, *Miller* v. *California*, held that obscenity laws could be used against acts patently appealing to prurient interest upon applying contemporary community standards.

Miller led to wonderful fiascos. Those eager to make the Supreme Court ruling active decided it would be a good idea to prosecute all those involved in producing and distributing *Deep Throat*. When it was shown in Memphis, Tennessee, the local prosecutor struck. His job appeared easy. *Deep Throat* is hard pornography, and Memphis is not a municipal brothel.

It is easiest to compress the story by recording simply that the anti-obscenity people failed. Defenders pleaded everything in the books, among them that there was, in *Deep Throat*, material not obscene that was of independent and redeeming interest, causing a ruling against the whole movie to be a licentious singularization of one part, at the expense of all parts. If your impulse is to laugh, cool it, and remember that laughter is *ultra vires* in legal argument.

But the most illuminating judicial impasse was about to happen. In nearby Cincinnati, the museum put on an exhibit of the photographs of the late Robert Mapplethorpe. Several of the photos featured activities that engrossed the artist, who had died of AIDS, and an obscenity suit was brought against the museum.

To the astonishment of orderly minds, the jury voted not guilty. An inquisitive reporter approached a juror to learn what had kept the jury from a guilty verdict.He told the reporter, sure, he thought the exhibit obscene. But there was this expert who had come in and said that there was redeeming value in the photographs. "I don't even like Picasso!" the helpless juror confided. Who was he to argue about the work of the artist Mapplethorpe? Never mind the photo of a male rectum with a bullwhip sticking out.

So, criminal prosecutions under obscenity laws are as dead as slave auctions. But the FCC has this sliver of authority still there, because it presides over the life of inanimate things that don't "belong" to anybody. What they are is airwaves, and who makes rules about what can go out over these airwaves is Congress, which created the FCC, which says: "Look, we know that *The Sopranos* can have gangbangs and sodomy and anal stuff and so on—but that's cable, and cable is privately owned. We have no authority over it. If a prosecutor wants to move against those people, why, let him go back to *Deep Throat* and Mapplethorpe time, and good luck. Meanwhile, we intend to do what we can."

Well, with the FCC's invocation of the Indecency Code, with the $3.6 million sting, is there one last chance to secrete good standards somewhere safe from the First Amendment? Or is decency no longer safe from the First Amendment? That's what we are supposed to find out.

Welcoming President Hu

NEW YORK, APRIL 21

We read of the protocols that confronted President Bush, even as they vexed President Hu Jintao. We safely assume that most of the questions were explored in private conversations between ambassadors, brought in for special coaching. A point was leaked/surmised to the effect that there was concern in Peking over the failure of President Bush to lay on a formal banquet, of the kind one associates with state visits. Perhaps the Chinese protocol expert was resourceful enough to advise the Chinese Foreign Office of a very simple fact, namely, that President Bush does not like state dinners. The president had to face up to derivative complications, namely that sparing himself a state dinner required him otherwise to put on the dog, and one has to assume that President Hu took in the Byzantine meaning of it all.

The Internet vouchsafes a succinct guide to protocol in dealing with Chinese visitors. Do not mention "Taiwan" except in such a context as would suggest that you were talking about a province, as integral to China as, well, Tennessee is to the U.S. Do not be surprised if the Chinese refer to gentlemen and ladies. Mr. Bush was warned not to stick Mr. Hu's calling card in his back pocket, and not to gesture with the fingers alone, the whole hand should be used to give expression to one's thoughts—which brings to mind the warning that a Chinese nod does not necessarily mean "yes."

It would probably have been a good idea for Mr. Bush to ignore any protocolary advice that got in the way of his natural modes of expression, which are very American, which means very wholesome. Extraordinary precautions can lead to excesses. I learned once from a traveling companion in the USIA that his mission on this trip to Thailand was to advise the court that the official gift by Vice President Agnew, whose state visit

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was imminent, was not to be taken as a measure of the magnitude of American devotion & awe for the Siamese throne. The USIA official needed to explain that Congress sets a limit on the cost of presidential alms to foreign princes.

There was the further complication, the need to advise Bangkok that an ancient protocol had to be violated. It held that no human head could in any situation be higher off the ground than that of the Thai king. But the television camera recording the meeting of our vice president and the king would simply have to be operated by a cameraman sitting on a tree limb, or else the great meeting would never be seen in the United States. Permission was granted, but the larger point of it, surely, is that permission would no longer need to be solicited, given our shrinking globe, which eases, day by day, the stiffness of many ancient protocols.

Problems of the size of Taiwan are best handled by common agreement to ignore them. Sometimes they cannot be ignored, as when President Carter suddenly kicked out the Taiwanese ambassador and recognized Peking in 1979. It became necessary to come up with a device to focus on the continuing U.S. pledge to secure the independence of Taiwan, which was accomplished not through devious diplomatic lingo, but through the affirmation of the Taiwan Relations Act. That was over a quarter of a century ago, and Taiwan lives on.

Protocol obviously prohibits such an exchange as would delight the legions who care about the objectives of diplomacy, one such, surely, being the encouragement of freedom in modern China. President Bush correctly pleaded for this, and there was the disruption by the bold Chinese lady. General Secretary Khrushchev got drunk one night when President Eisenhower was hosting him at Camp David in 1959, and Ike learned a great deal. One can imagine such an exchange today. "Mr. Hu, why does your government go on as it does every now and then on the Communist business? You're no more a Communist than I am. Nobody in your country cares about Karl Marx, or is guided by his stuff . . . Oh well, forget it. We'll go along with your act, if that's what you want us to do, but before I forget, leave Taiwan alone, okay?"

The interpreters nod, and one observer thinks he sees one of them winking.

Gas Gouge

NEW YORK, APRIL 25

THE gas problem was nicely framed recently by two news items. The first was the report that Lee Raymond received $400 million in his retirement package as chairman of ExxonMobil. The second was the published sketch of the projected backboard for airline passengers willing to travel more or less standing up, helping out the airlines' need for extra revenues to pay for—Lee Raymond's gas.

That is a populist formulation, invited by recent news. Concerning it, a few comments.

—Mr. Raymond is correctly charged with, at the least, an extraordinary act of indecorum. Granted, the capitalist model does not (and should not) limit the size of a wage or a bonus. ExxonMobil paid $23 *billion* in taxes last year, which gives us some idea of the scale of an activity whose gross income exceeds the combined income of IBM, General Motors, and AT&T. Which is why it is best to fault Raymond and the directors of ExxonMobil using the language of civility: a lack of decorum is what it was. One correctly declines to specify a limitation on figures that arise from the workings of the marketplace, which are not to be confused with machinations of the marketplace. If Raymond were guilty of a violation of antitrust laws one could look at the towering figure of his retirement package as corresponding perfectly to the high reaches of avarice and contrivance.

But no such charges have been leveled. Which means observers are left to cope with the sheer vulgarity of the transaction. Why didn't the directors put on such brakes as decency required? Why didn't Raymond stop after, say, $100 million, and assign the rest to a fund to help standing-room-only airline passengers?

The public reaction tends to indignation and then to wondering about means of punishment. Ideally one would see stockholder action resulting in the ouster of every director of ExxonMobil who voted to authorize the gargantuan retirement package. The shareholders have direct means of expressing themselves: by voting against the current directors, or by selling their shares, if they believe that the sum paid to Raymond is an indication of company extravagance.

What about that general public? How can it punish directors who do not do the right thing?

The directest way is to withhold economic support. If ExxonMobil manufactured a brand of peanut butter, the public could express itself on the subject by boycotting ExxonMobil peanut butter.

This doesn't work, of course, when it is gasoline being sold at the pump. Gas is gas—fungible stuff. Pausing at the pump we do not deliberate whether what we are paying for is gas that originated in Oklahoma or in Nigeria.

And indignation at oil prices is not intelligently exercised by legislative action.

Factors to be considered are varied.

—In the past 20 years, profits from oil and gas investment have been lower than the profits from many alternative economic enterprises. Ten percent profit is normal (and normative). Oil and gas investments have tended to run two or three points lower than that ten percent.

—To effect an increase in supply requires a lot of investment and a lot of patience. Five to ten years, significantly to increase supply.

—The stranglehold of OPEC is not easily dealt with by normal economic responses, given that it is a politically controlled oligopoly.

—The causes of significant shortfalls in oil production are often political. Mexico is off on another nationalistic excess. Nigeria is in turmoil, reducing production. Iraq is almost one million barrels a day under what it used to produce. Iran is a day-by-day disrupter. The Saudis, who in the past have, with their huge reserves, acted as a kind of federal bank, are needing to do more development.

There isn't anything the U.S. can do—except keep its legislative fingers out of the stew. And open its blinded eyes to the possibilities of nuclear energy.

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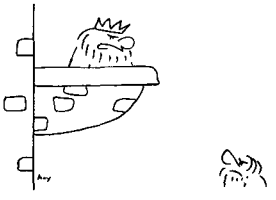

"Of course you don't remember voting for me, dummy!"

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happy warrior

MARK STEYN

In 'the Same Boat,' Up a Creek

I HATE writing about immigration, really I do. I'm an immigrant myself and it's hardly my place to say who should or shouldn't be let into America. I feel like the weekending New Yorker who snaps up the last 18th-century farmhouse in Vermont and then goes to Town Meeting to gripe about the proposed subdivision on the edge of the village.

Nonetheless, like most legal immigrants, I resent the conflation made by everyone from the president down between the vast army of the Undocumented and those of us who are Documented to our eyeballs (literally: my retinal scan is in the Homeland Security computer, but fortunately it's incompatible with the FBI computer, so my eyeballs can go on a bank-robbing spree through the Midwest with impunity). We legal immigrants paid gazillions of dollars, went through INS hell, and filled in all the stupid paperwork, like the form demanding to know whether we're coming to America with the intent of practicing a) genocide or b) prostitution. As it happens, I'm a genocidal prostitute but I took a gamble that the government doesn't really check these things, and so far it seems to be panning out.

I came here, like millions of others, to do the jobs Americans won't do—in this case, the back-page column of NATIONAL REVIEW (it was offered to Maureen Dowd and Anna Quindlen, but they fled in terror). However, I in turn also employ several Americans: As one of my grateful minions likes to say, "In our case, we need immigrants to come here to hire Americans to do the jobs immigrants won't do." They in turn disburse their earnings in the local economy. By contrast, the fine upstanding members of the Undocumented-American community send so much money back home to their family members that these "remittances" now outrank tourism and oil as Mexico's biggest source of foreign income. I raised a biometrically scanned eyebrow when I heard that, but it's true. As a subject of Her Britannic Majesty, I hate to keep walloping you guys over the head with my imperialist pith helmet. But, because you were short-sighted enough a century ago to disdain nation-building in Mexico, Mexico is now nation-building in America. President Fox has every incentive to keep outsourcing what would otherwise be his domestic instability north of the border—and thus any illegal-immigration deal the Mexican government goes along with will be, almost by definition, not in America's interest.

There's no equivalent to this in the entire history of U.S. immigration. Indeed, it is so at odds with traditional patterns of immigration that it demands a whole new terminology. Instead, 90 percent of the political class is doing its best to rhetorically normalize this uniquely deformed scenario. Or as Carol Moseley Braun put it during the 2004 presidential campaign:

"My late mother used to say it doesn't matter if you came to this country on the *Mayflower* or a slave ship, through Ellis Island or across the Rio Grande, we're all in the same boat now."

I take my hat off: That's beautifully coded. Whether you came here as slaveowner or slave, filing the paperwork in triplicate or through the express check-in, everyone's an immigrant and all the rest is quibbling. Who are we to distinguish between some uptight white-bread Pilgrim disembarking at Plymouth Rock and Mahmoud abu Halima, a hardworking young man forced to live in the shadows because he wanted to live the American dream and do the jobs that Americans won't do? Fortunately, he was pardoned in the '86 amnesty. In his case, the dream involved destroying America and the job Americans wouldn't do was blowing up the World Trade Center, which he did in 1993. But, like Carol says, Irish Americans, Italian Americans, Illegal Americans, Islamist Americans, Incendiary Americans, we're all in the same boat now, even if it's a seaplane coming through the window of a New York skyscraper.

What unnerves me is that there's no basic difference between the president's philosophical disposition and Carol Moseley Braun's. And that's alarming because it implicitly delegitimizes the basic notion that a state has the right to determine which non-citizens shall cross its borders. In practical terms, the Braun-Bush view concedes that the southern border is the American version of the Pakistani tribal areas, a land where the state's de jure sovereignty can only ever be honored in the breach. And, beyond that, it communicates the same lack of will we rightly bemoan from the Europeans vis-à-vis the Islamists.

That's not to say America's Mexicans are the equivalent of Europe's Muslims: At the very minimum, they're less unassimilable. But, as the Continent is discovering, you have to have something to assimilate to, not merely a multicultural nullity. And every time I pull up at the payphone in downtown Burlington, Vt., and read instructions in Spanish—in a jurisdiction with a statewide total of seven Latinos and where the only linguistic minority is French-Canadian—I marvel at a society so secure it's voluntarily cooperating in the erection of what almost every other country on the planet knows to be one of the biggest obstacles to national cohesion.

President Fox has every incentive to keep outsourcing what would otherwise be his domestic instability.

No one should underestimate the tensions in bicultural societies with even relatively small differences. Never mind Rwanda or Bosnia, think Canada and the United Kingdom. To accede to the bilingualization of your country and to import a population that disputes your border would seem likely at the very minimum to set you up for the destabilizing tribalization that afflicts both Quebec and Ulster politics. If you're lucky. That seems a high price to pay for a cheap pool boy. It may be an economic issue to Vicente Fox; this side of the border, it's about sovereignty. **NR**

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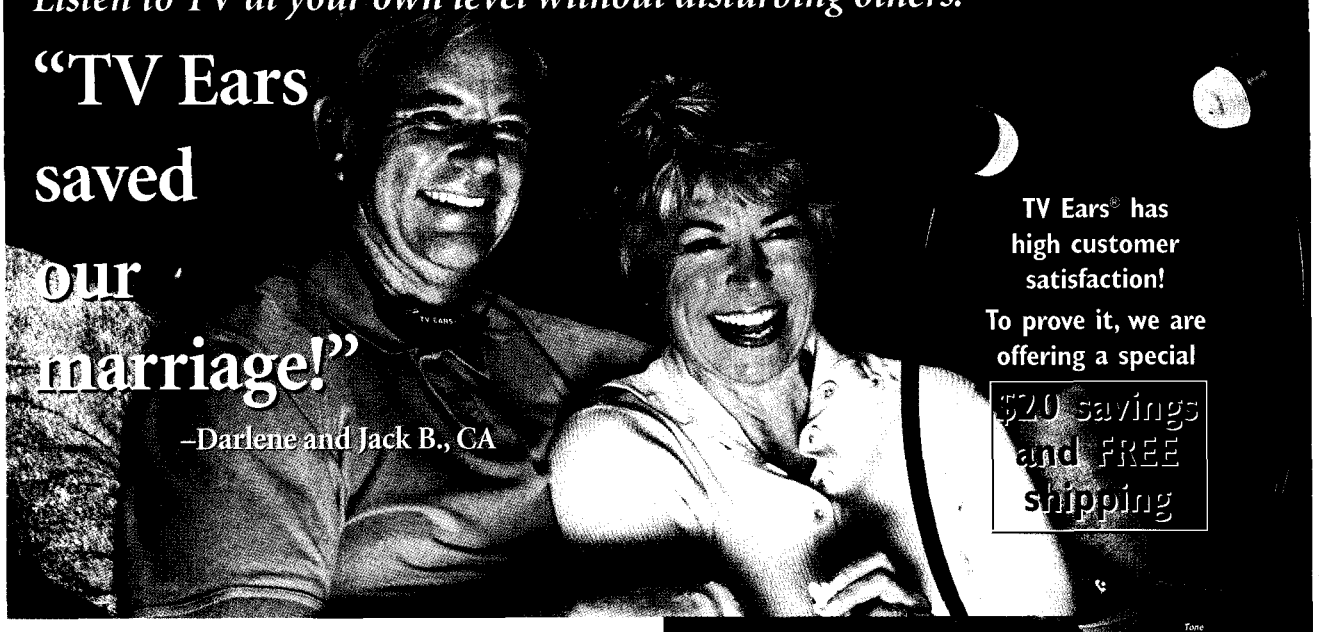

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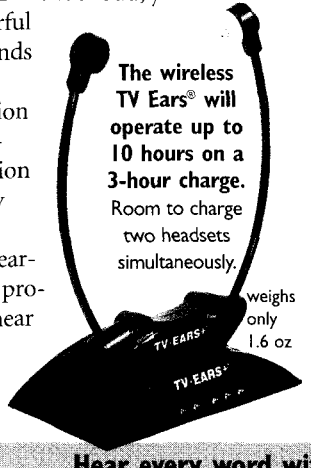

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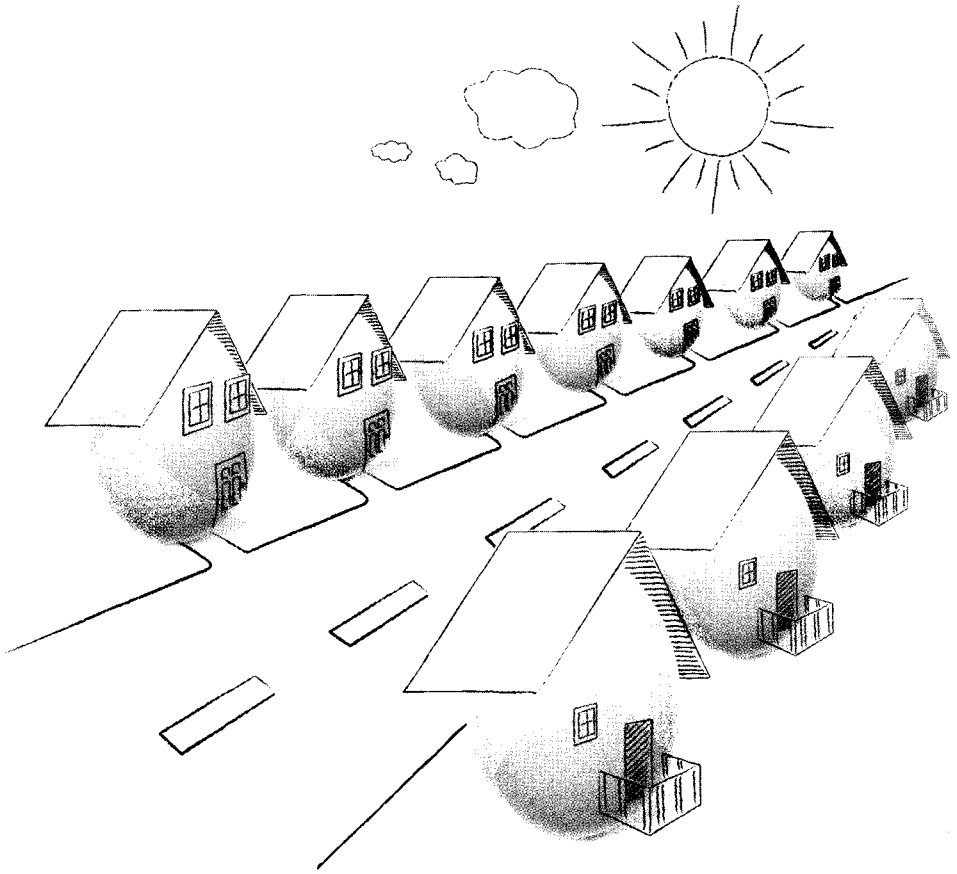

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